

# Honi Soit

SEMESTER 2 WEEK 10  
6 OCTOBER 2010



## QUEER EDITION

**Monsters! Weird Goo! Queers!**

**Queers + Religion: Worst Friends 4eva?**

**Other Lovers: What to do when you're lime-green jello**

# Contents

4-5

Asexuality 101

Queer Dictionary

6-7

How to offend a Trans\* Person  
101

Bebe

Queer Marriage

Catherine Garner

Polyamory and the Green-eyed  
Monster

Ren Arcamone

8-9

The Lesbian Mafia

Alex Mckinnon

Why Not to Say “That’s So  
Gay!”

Damien Costello

Cutepllosion! It’s Josh Thomas

Benjamin Veness

10-11

Cisinformation

William Wallace

The Same-Sex Adoption Bill

Paul Karp

Declassification

norrie mAy-welby

Services For Queer People

Wear it Purple Day

12-13

Queers and Religion: Strange  
Bedfellows or Irreconcilably  
Divorced?

Tommy Berne

14-15

A Little Bit Shade-y

Martin Wylie

Shades

The Invisible Queer

Review: *The Kids are Alright*

Cindy Chong

Queerdoku!

16

Where’s My  
Queerspace?

Jed Coppa

Yay! Autonomy! Also,  
why?

William Wallace

17-19

SRC Pages

20-23

The ZineSpace

The editors of Queer Honi Soit wish to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which this publication was produced, the Gadigal people of the Eora nation. This land was never ceded and today the legacy of colonialism continues in the massive inequalities faced by Indigenous people accross the nation, compounded by continued paternalistic intervention into their communities. The editors of Queer Honi Soit wish to express their solidarity with all Indigenous people, but particularly queer and trans\* Indigenous people, in their struggles for justice and self-determination.

**Editors:** Ren “Aaaaargh”rcamone, Tommy “Kraken“ Berne, William “Wolfman“ Wallace, Ben “Spiky Dinosaur” Bolton, Damien “Bride of Frankenstein“ Costello, Jaya “Cookie-Monster“ Keaney, Paul “Magic” Karp.

With special thanks to the monsterriffic Carman Culina from the Honi Soit team, and our favourite demon slayers Amanda and Tina from the SRC Publications Office. Thankyou for helping us look more professional than we actually are.



**DISCLAIMER** *Honi Soit* is published by the Students’ Representative Council, University of Sydney, Level 1 Wentworth Building, City Road, University of Sydney, NSW, 2006. The SRC’s operation costs, spaceand administrative support are financed by the University of Sydney. The editors of *Honi Soit* and the SRC acknowledge the traditional owners of this land, the Gadigal people of the Eora nation. *Honi Soit* is written, printed, and distributed on Aboriginal land. *Honi Soit* is printed under the auspices of the SRC’s directors of student publications: Tim Mooney, Steph D’Souza, Alistair Stephenson, Andy Thomas, & Mel Brooks. All expressions are published on the basis that they are not to be regarded as the opinions of the SRC unless specifically stated. The Council accepts no responsibility for the accuracy of any of the opinions or information contained within this newspaper, nor does it endorse any of the advertisements and insertions.



# Letters

## Wrong edition

Dear Aunty Trude,

Please help me, I need some advice on how to woo my heterosexual friend that I have had a crush on for years.

**Desperate**

Economics III

P.S. I too am a heterosexual

*Eds: Sorry you got the wrong edition, Desperate. Maybe next week.*

## Please Sir, can I have some more?

Dear Honi,

Why are you only queer for one week of the year? Why can't you be queer more often? Is it something to do with the fact it's spring? Or do you get too much harassment from your loyal readers every year that you feel you have to go in the closet again for a year? Please don't go back in next year... I think I love you.

**Anon**

*Eds: Actually, we're queer all the time! While there may be only one queer honi there are plenty of fab queer events to keep you in glitter-trousers all year 'round!*

## Queers Ahoy!

Yarr,

I be interested in finding some new ways to entertain me-self with me new peg-leg.

**Cap'n Butt**

Piracy I

## Tune in next week for...

Dear Honi,

I am deeply offended that there is a queer edition but that no straight edition is made. This is the same fake moral outrage I expressed for the Women's edition for the same reason. Why isn't there an edition for white, heterosexual upper middle class males?

Sincerely,

**Some rich white guy,**

Law II

## Here be dragons...

Dear Honi,

I'm afriad I've come over a little queer. I have the most terribly bad breath, my palms have grown fur and I have an overwhelming desire to howl at the moon. Any advice?

**M. Mash**

Science II

*Eds: Come join the queer honi editing team! You'll fit right in!*

## Pray for Gay

Dear Honi,

There's a really hot EU boy in my lecture. I just can't stop thinking about him! I even went along to the This Is Life? week events just to be closer to him! There was one moment that he caught my eye. I guessed he knew I was looking and he smiled. Do you think it's a sign?

Faithfully yours,

**Doubtful Thomas**

Arts VII

## Close Encounter

Dear Queer Honi,

So this weird thing happened to me the other day. I was walking along, listening to my iPod, Lady Gaga, I think, or Madonna, maybe, actually I'm not too sure now, but whatever, so ok, so I'm walking down the street with my tunes, doing my own thing, when this guy came round the corner. Stumbled, kinda. I don't know, he looked pretty out of it, like pretty messed up, and at first I was kinda worried, like, was this dude okay? i mean, he had these kinda red eyes and his veins were all popping, and he had his arms stuck out in front of him and he was groaning, or like, making noises, and like, his face looked kinda bloodied up, actually there was blood all over him so, you know, of course I was all like, are you okay??

But then he kinda came towards me, like, kinda, charged at me, seriously, and then, you wouldn't believe it, like this sounds really messed up, but he like, bit me. Like, hard. In like a serious way, not like, biting in a playful way, but more like, 'I wanna om nom your whole fucking arm' kinda way. Like, ow! And totally non consensual. Like,

# Editorial

You have probably noticed by now that this is not a regular edition of Honi Soit. In fact, it's the Queer Edition! Super fun happy times! The Queer Edition gives queer students the opportunity to voice their thoughts and feelings on a variety of issues that affect both queers specifically and society as a whole.

A whole bunch of issues highlight the continuing oppression of queers: from marriage inequality to the massively disproportionate frequency of queer and trans\* youth suicide. Now that adoption reform has gone through in New South Wales we are closing the gap in some areas of inequality, however, much work is yet to be done. As long as queers are denied equal rights in the eyes of the law, we are still oppressed. We can see that society is moving forward and at a (relatively) liberal and accepting campus like USYD it may seem that queer issues are less of the priority that they once were. Yet as long as queers are told by various conservative groups that we are unnatural, that our relationships aren't equally valid, that we chose to be the way we were born, we will need a Queer Honi edition. While trans\* people have to avoid drinking to much water so they don't have to enter unsafe bathrooms, or display incorrect gender on their university IDs, we will need a Queer Honi edition. As long as queers face oppression, both here and abroad,

there will be a need for queer voices to be heard. Being queer is a challenge to oppression. Being queer is political.

~

This year's Queer Honi is themed "Monster!" Monsters are exciting! But often they are also excluded. Remember Frankenstein's monster? And how he just wanted love, and maybe another monster to hang out with? Well, aside from the accidental child-killing, sometimes queers can feel a bit like Frankenstein's monster. Queers can be alienated from their sexualities, their bodies, and their friends. Some queers learn that they're not really monsters after all, some just try to be the best monsters they can. Queers, they are complicated in their relationship with Monsterdom. This edition has a whole bunch of different queer monsters and non-monsters sharing themselves, and we the editors, alongside our good friend the Creature from the Overly-Stretched Analogy, want to celebrate that.

Queer Honi is an opportunity to celebrate the diversity of queer life. It gives us an opportunity to look back at how far we have come and how far we have yet to go. We hope that you all enjoy this edition as much as we enjoyed putting it together.

dude! That's my arm! Don't do that! So I pushed him off and ran, coz I was like, clearly freaked out. But anyway, now I'm worried this bite mark is getting infected. See, it started to swell up and I've been feeling a bit woozy, and like, kinda really weirweird, and weirdly hungry, too, actually, and I'm worried I might be like, coming down with something. Anyway, I was wonderinggggggg if you. had... any likeadvice onnnnnn wwhat I should do tozcfnggnvmv RAWRRRRRR BRAINS!! OM NOM NOM TASTY HUMAN BRAINS RAAWWWWRRRRR GIVE ME BRAINS!!!!!!!! GAR GARRRRRR ROGARAOUGAH OM NOM NOM NOM NOM MUST HUNT AND KILL RAGE IS OVERPOWERING INEXPLICABLE AND YET WEIRDLY SPECIFIC HUNGER FOR HUMAN BRAINS AND RAW FLESH GAHHHH ROMSDNBZDLF KILL KILL KILL KILL KILL KILL KILL KILL KILL KILL

**You don't even want to know...**

Nursing II



# Asexuality 101

“Unlike celibacy, which is a choice, asexuality is a sexual orientation. Asexual people do not experience sexual attraction. Asexual people have the same emotional needs as anyone else, and, like in the sexual community, we vary widely in how we fulfil those needs. Some asexual people are happier on their own, others are happiest with a group of close friends. Other asexual people have a desire to form more intimate romantic relationships, and will date and seek long-term partnerships. Asexual people are just as likely to date sexual people as we are to date each other.”

## Asexual Visibility and Education Network

This definition is a nice starting point. However, if you thought you had asexuality, and asexual (or ace, ase, a, or non-sexual) people, pinned down after reading it, think again.

Identities are some complex shit. Not all asexuals agree on the above definition (although it's the most widely used), and not all feel it describes their identity. Some asexuals experience attraction, some don't. Some date other asexuals, some date sexuals, some don't date at all. Some ace people experience arousal, some don't. Sometimes this arousal is directed at other people, sometimes it isn't. Some asexual people masturbate, others don't. And on that, unless someone says so, you don't have the right to ask.

Asexual is not a clear-cut label. It has a variety of different meanings and anyone is encouraged to use it. As long as identifying as asexual makes you feel comfortable with who you are, it's totally fine to use the word, even if at some point you stop identifying as such. People and identities change – acknowledging fluidity doesn't make an identity any less valid. Above all, if you want to use the word 'asexual' to describe a part of your identity, then no-one can question its validity other than yourself. The rest of this article is a practical guide to avoid Stupid Myths and saying things that

make asexual people feel uncomfortable, unwelcome, or unnatural.

### Stupid Myth #1: Asexual people are asexual because they've been abused.

Most bullshit sentence ever. Not only is this stupid and offensive, it's incredibly damaging. There are asexual people who are abuse survivors because unfortunately we live in a world where this happens to lots of people. If someone has experienced abuse and identifying as asexual makes them feel more comfortable for any period of time, then they are just as entitled to use the label as anyone else, but don't ever assume that this is the reason for someone's asexuality. It suggests that all people are naturally sexual, that being sexual is normal until something happens that changes them into asexuals. And if something can change us from sexual to asexual, then something can change us back, and we just need to find that thing that will fix us – whether it be 'finding the right person', or having a good sexual experience. This idea is dangerous to someone coming to terms with their asexuality because it can lead to lots of shit experiences while trying to do things you don't want to.

### Stupid Myth #2: Asexual people don't want to date.

Some asexual people (some identifying as aromantic) don't experience attraction to people, and don't want to be in a relationship. Others do experience romantic attraction, and do want to have romantic relationships.

### Stupid Myth #3: Asexual people can't, or shouldn't, date sexual people.

It's entirely possible for asexual and sexual people to form relationships. It can be difficult, like any relationship, but it is neither impossible nor uncommon. Contrary to what many people think, sex is not a compulsory component of a healthy relationship. With good communication and respect, relationships can be whatever people make them – romantic, platonic, sexual, or anything else.

### Stupid Myth #4: Asexual people never have sex.

Asexual people might have sex for a variety of reasons, just like sexual people. Sometimes relationships between asexual and sexual people involve negotiation and compromise regarding sexual situations – some asexual people feel

comfortable participating in certain kinds of sexy-type things because they get satisfaction (whether it be sexual or non-sexual) from pleasing their partner in a sexual way. 'Sex' also means a whole bunch of different things to everyone, whether they're asexual or sexual or anything else. Identity can't be confused with behaviour: just because someone of a particular identity doesn't behave the way you expect doesn't mean you can ignore their identity.

### Stupid Myth #5: Asexual people think all sex is bad.

Lots of people think that asexual people can't be positive about sex. It is true that many asexual people have had negative experiences of sex, and many have negative views of sex, but so do many sexual people. Being asexual doesn't exclude someone from supporting the rights of others (or even themselves) to have as much (or as little!) safe and consensual sex with as many (or as few!) people as they like, free from judgement and discrimination.

So, in short, be nice to peeps, and respect and embrace the HUGE diversity of identities and experiences around you!

## Definitions

Some handy-dandy definitions for the curious and the queer. By no means the final word on all things queer, think of this list as a starting point. This is an excerpt from the very fabulous **2010 Queer Collaborations reader**.

**ANDROGYNY:** The state of being neither particularly masculine nor feminine, or of being ambiguous.

**ASEXUAL:** (ace, ase, a, nonsexual) AVEN (asexuality.org) defines an asexual person as “someone who does not experience sexual attraction. Asexual people have the same emotional needs as anyone else, and like in the sexual community, we vary widely in how we fulfil those needs. Some asexual people are happier on their own, others are happiest with a group of close friends. Others will date and seek longterm partnerships.”

**CIS/CISGENDER/CISSEX:** Terms to describe people who are not trans\*, genderqueer, or sex and/or gender diverse. Cis people's assigned gender, gender presentation, gender identity,

and sex tend to align in ways that trans\*, genderqueer, and intersex, sex and/or gender diverse people's do not.

**GLBTIQ:** Is the acronym for people who identify as Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Trans\*, Intersex and/or Queer.

**GENDER:** In one sense, gender refers to the way in which society likes to pigeon-hole people into the labels of 'man' or 'woman', based on their biological sex and the way they interpret an individual's presentation to be 'masculine' or 'feminine'.

**GENDERQUEER:** A genderqueer person is someone who doesn't fit into the traditional gender binary system, and might not identify as being either a man or a woman, or may identify as both.

**HETEROSEXISM:** The name given to the system (sometimes also referred to as heteropatriarchy) by which heterosexuality is privileged and promoted, and non-heterosexual “lifestyles” are dismissed and marginalised.

**HETERONORMATIVITY:** Used to describe the manner in which many social institutions and social policies reinforce particular beliefs, including that human beings fall into two distinct gender categories (woman and man) and that sexual and marital relations are normal only between two people of differing gender.

**INTERSEX:** Intersex is physical difference in anatomical sex. That is, physical differences in reproductive parts like the vulva, clitoris, ovaries, testicles, penis, and so on. Intersex is also the physical differences in secondary sexual characteristics such as muscle mass, hair distribution, breast development, and stature.

**ISGD:** Stands for Intersex, Sex and/or Gender Diverse. ISGD is a new term

that can function as an umbrella term for a whole bunch of intersex and trans\* identities, including, but not limited to: androgyne, bigender, crossdresser, genderqueer, intersex, nongender, third gender, trans, transgender, transsex, and lots of others.

**POLYAMORY:** Loving more than one person. Used to refer to amorous relationships that deliberately and openly involve more than two people.

**TRANS\*:** Trans\* is an umbrella term that refers to individuals who do not identify with their biological sex either some or all of the time, and/or don't conform to the gender binary. Many identities can be included under this umbrella, such as transgender, transsex, genderqueer, bigender, androgyne, third gender, crossdresser, nongender people, and many, many more. The use of the asterisk is a way some people like to visually acknowledge the broad diversity of different identities that fit under the descriptor or term 'trans'.





# I'M IMPROVING THE HEALTH OF MY CAREER

I worked hard to get where I am now and am working in a job I love, helping children and adults with speech and communication difficulties. *Emma Crust, Speech Pathology graduate*

HEALTH SCIENCES

INFORMATION  
SESSION



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
**SYDNEY**

Qualifying you to practise as a health professional, our graduate entry master's programs accept students from a range of study backgrounds.

**Graduate Entry Master's Degrees Information Session**  
Thursday 14 Oct 2010, 6pm-7pm  
Seminar Room 100, New Law Building, Camperdown Campus

Register today at

**[sydney.edu.au/health\\_sciences](http://sydney.edu.au/health_sciences)**



# How to offend a Trans\* person 101

Etiquette can be tricky, and if you're not in the know, etiquette around Trans\* people can be downright difficult. Here's **Bebe's** top 10 list of DON'Ts when hanging out with the Trans\* folk.

## 'Have you had surgery?'

This question essentially asks, 'What does your junk look like?' Would you mind if I came up to you and asked you how long your cock is, or whether you're cut, or whether it bends left or right, or where your clitoris is, or whether you're an 'innie' or an 'outtie', or how deep your vagina is, or... You get my point. And for people who often (but not always) have more issues with their body than the average bear, these questions are not only massively inappropriate and invasive, they also highlight the issues this person may already have with their body. It also further reinforces society's compulsive need to categorize people by their junk. And that kinda sucks.

## 'What's your REAL name?'

Someone's previous or birth-assigned name is pretty much irrelevant, so why do you need to know? Answer: you don't. Remember that hideous highschool nickname you were branded with after that epic piss-up in Year Nine where you vomited all over yourself? Well, every time you call a Trans\* person by their old name, you are calling them Spew Pants. Knowing someone's previous name might also increase your chance of slipping up on their real name, which is a really common frustration for Trans\* people. For me personally, if it happens

frequently enough, I will often withdraw from the relationship, particularly with some random person I just met. It also potentially highlights the years of being called a name that at best didn't fit and at worst was associated with massive levels of trauma.

## 'Wow, you're super masculine/feminine.'

We could call this, 'Critiquing someone's gender performance'. This is when you pick up on some gesture or movement or phrase your Trans\* friend is using and tell them it's just not up to scratch as far as their gender identity is concerned. Guess what? They don't need you to do it for them! People with differing gender identities or performances will often spend hours and hours self-critiquing. Some random person pointing out those aspects of someone's gender performance is just offensive and boring. It not only suggests that there is a 'correct' way of behaving and that all cis men and women behave in those ways, which they obviously don't, but also that you as a random person have the right to shape the way in which someone else moves through the world.

## 'But I never would have guessed!'

This is the most common thing people say to me. If you are considering using this line, try replacing it with: 'I never

would have guessed that you were not a cis person because you look enough like a REAL man/woman, unlike all those other UGLY Trans\* people who DON'T look like REAL men/women'. Umm, thanks but no.

## 'But you're so good looking!'

This is another insult trying to be a compliment. A compliment would be 'You are really really good looking'. This statement instead says: 'But you're so good looking, unlike all those other UGLY HIDEOUS Trans\* people!'. It also places value on men who are masculine and women who are feminine. Bleurgh.

## 'Are you Trans\* because you had childhood trauma?'

Everyone has childhood trauma, or at least most people do. Some of the trauma Trans\* people experience is being born into the incorrect or ill-fitting body, but this is pretty chicken and egg. As a general rule don't go about asking people about potential childhood trauma if they are Trans\* or cis (not-Trans\*). It's just kinda weird.

## 'That's what she... I mean, what HE said!'

Always try to remember people's preferred pronouns. For people who don't pass, people who are not going to, or people who have yet to start physically transitioning, this can be really really painful and frustrating. Everyone makes mistakes and we are all programmed to associate particular physical characteristics with particular pronouns

(like, facial hair with he/his/him or breasts with she/her/hers), but try to make an effort, and if you do fuck up, make sure you apologise. Most people will understand your mistake, but if you try to just ignore it then it may lead to the awkward 'Did you just mis-gender me?' discussion. And that just opens up a whole new bag of annoying. So just own up to it, it's probably happened a stack of times and they will be happy that you admitted it and then apologised.

## 'So how do you.... um.... "do" it?'

Really? Come on, really? Would you answer that if someone asked you? I mean, besides the fact that it's rather difficult to give a blow-by-blow account of what you enjoy in the sack, it's probably none of your business. Unless you're about to get it on and are looking for pointers, keep those questions to yourself.

## Using any of the following words:

She-male, tranny, he-she, shim, hermaphrodite, mangina, trap, cock-in-a-frock, lady-boy (unless they identify as such), transvestite (unless they identify as such) and so on, you get the point.

'Why???' The trump card of stupid questions. Being asked this will lead me to ask, 'Why are you cis?', and beyond that, 'Why am I still talking to you?' That's just the way things go sometimes.

# Queer Marriage?

Catherine Garner says "I do not".

Unless you live under a rock you've probably heard some of the recent debate over same-sex marriage. If you haven't, here's a quick run down. The queers want to get married and some of the heteros don't want them to for a variety of weird and wonderful reasons.

What you might not have realised is that there are some queers, like me, who don't want the gays to get married. Don't get me wrong, it's not that I have a particular problem with queers getting married, it's more about that fact that I just don't think ANYONE should be getting married. So in the interest of general information and journalistic integrity here is my long list of why I don't think anybody, queer, straight or undecided, should get married.

1. Marriage is sexist. Marriage is an institution defined by a long history and tradition of sexism that was used as a means of oppressing women and maintaining men's hegemony for most of history. Need an example? How about asking your father's permission before proposing, being "given away"

by your father, or the history of using engagement rings as a means of marking a woman as taken. And all of those before the marriage even gets started. Marriage started as a way for men to transfer property between themselves, and by "property" I mean women. And that's not to mention monogamy as the simplest way to assure paternity and thus produce "legitimate" children, and using marriage as a way to establish a husband's legal entitlement to his wife's domestic and sexual services. Nice, huh?

2. The average cost of a wedding in Australia is \$28,700. Just think about how many beers at Manning, textbooks or heck, even cars you could buy with that much money. \$28,700 for one party. ONE! Honestly, I shouldn't even need to say any more because to my mind, spending that amount of money on one day is just obscene, but in case you weren't already convinced maybe it would be worth considering why people think that they need to spend so much money on clothes and shoes and cake just for one day. Isn't one of the great

things about love that it's free?

3. Weddings are gross and boring. The only reason to go is to take advantage of the fact that someone else is shelling out for the food and booze. It doesn't matter if you're straight or queer, nobody likes having to get all dressed up, stand around for three hours talking to drunk Aunt Mabel and then listen to the happy couple talk about how in love they are and how they are going to be together forever. Sounds vom-tastic to me.

4. Just as it's discrimination that queers can't get married, isn't it also discriminatory to privilege certain kinds of relationships, that is, monogamous ones, over other

kinds, for example non-monogamous relationships? Isn't it also problematic that in order to have access to a bunch of social and legal rights and resources people have to enter into a binding, state dictated contract? Wouldn't it be better for the state to get out of the business of controlling relationships and get back to the business of governing, and use the resources on something trivial, like education or healthcare?





# “But don’t you get jealous??” Polyamory and the green-eyed monster

Ren Arcamone is pretty easy being green.

Coming out to my best friend about being polyamorous was not as easy as I’d hoped. I knew what her first words were going to be before they left her mouth. Her eyebrow raised, her lips pursed slightly, she eyed me skeptically. ‘That’s great,’ she said slowly, and then, ‘You sound really happy.’ Ah, but wait. There’s a ‘but’ coming. I can hear it on the tip of her tongue. ‘But-’

Here it comes.

‘But don’t you get jealous??’

Bingo. We have a winner.

She looks at me knowingly. She’s wearing her you-can-tell-me-anything face. I suddenly realise it’s going to be a long night.

Luckily, I know I’m not alone in my frustration. Polyamorous people everywhere are frequently approached with the same bewilderment, shock and incomprehension by folks who have only ever known monogamy. But for many people, living in a world somewhere between Hollywood scandal and purity balls, where everyone is driven towards exclusive coupledness, it’s a fair question.

So how does someone choose polyamory? Can you ever really be okay with your partner fucking another person? And most importantly, don’t you get jealous??

## The Truth About Jealousy

The answer, of course, is yes. The way that most people are socialised – brought up in nuclear families and fed Disney fairytales – conditions them to feel that



you can’t have sexual or romantic feelings for more than one person, and people in polyamorous relationships are no exception. So yes, even poly people will get jealous. Much of this indoctrination occurs from the moment we take our first breath, so escaping those feelings entirely is nigh on impossible. There is no off-switch, no quick-fix solution, and in all likelihood, anyone who tells you they’ve never been jealous is either a saint or lying.

However, just because everyone experiences jealousy at one point or another, it doesn’t mean that jealousy is impossible to overcome, or that you can’t learn new ways to approach your emotions. Fortunately, while jealousy itself is a reality, most of the things we’re taught about it are pure fiction.

## The Myths About Jealousy

Society teaches us lots of fucked up things. Some things are easy to recognise as being fucked up, like the idea that sex is bad or women are possessions or queer people are unnatural. Some ideas, especially those about how we behave in relationships, are harder to dismiss and are frequently more insidious. How often have you thought, ‘there is someone out there who will be able to fulfil all my emotional needs?’ or, ‘being in a relationship will make me feel complete?’ Okay, well add to that list of lies ‘you can only ever be in love with one person at a time’. When you’ve got that one wedged firmly in your mind, we can take a closer look at the fucked up things we’re taught about jealousy.

The best lie about jealousy? ‘Jealousy is inevitable and impossible to overcome’. If your partner likes someone besides you, you will feel it, and boy will it hurt. In fact, it will hurt so much that your chest will probably explode open and spray your whole bedroom with your internal organs, and they will remain there forever, because no amount of industrial-strength Ajax will be able to remove the stain of your everlasting heartbreak. Got it?

Jealousy is difficult, but it’s by no means the hardest or worst experience in the world. At a polyamory workshop held at this year’s Queer Collaborations (QC), one speaker remarked on the horror with which many of her acquaintances spoke about jealousy. ‘What if you get jealous? Well, so what? It’s not cancer. It’s not like some incurable, fatal disease. Or some people say, “Oh, I couldn’t deal with that [polyamory]. I’m jealous. I’m just a jealous person.” Umm... It’s not like being tall or short.

Jealousy isn’t a fixed state, or an unalterable aspect of someone’s personality. Just as it would be weird to say, ‘I’m an angry person’ or, ‘I’m a bored person’, identifying yourself with a state of emotion like jealousy limits the kind of person you can be. Furthermore, pulling the ‘jealous type’ card lets you get away with not examining your emotions when they do come up – you don’t have

to reflect on whether maybe you feel insecure in the relationship, or whether you need to work through feelings of abandonment, or whether you have low self esteem about how interesting you are, or whatever, because after all, you’re just ‘naturally’ jealous.

But jealousy can be unlearned. Just as you can learn to manage your desires to throw tantrums in shopping malls or keep all of the choc-chip cookies to yourself, you can also learn how to manage jealousy.

## Unlearning Jealousy

Writers of the successful 1997 book *The Ethical Slut* Dossie Easton and Catherine Liszt recommend that you take steps to ‘disempower your jealousy’ in a way that makes it possible to deal with it whenever it arises. Generally, you can start by recognising that you’re not going to turn your bedroom wall into a Jackson Pollock-style artwork with the remains of your exploded organs if you do get jealous. If you get jealous, it will suck, but it will also pass, and you will be okay. And in the meantime, there are things you can do to make it easier on yourself, and get better at understanding how your emotions work.

## Get Upset

*The Ethical Slut* recommends that you take some time out by yourself to ‘feel your feelings’. Get upset. Have a cry. Punch pillows. Watch *The Titanic*. Write ‘FUCK’ in giant red crayon all over a blank notebook. Listen to Radiohead. Allow yourself to feel well and truly miserable. If you can’t experience what you’re really feeling, there’s no way you can understand how to change your thinking. Just make sure that you’re safe, and that you don’t spend too much time immersed in the wallowing.

## Get Comfy

If you know your partner is going to spend the night out on a hot date, sometimes it helps to just settle in and prepare yourself for the evening. Instead of thinking about all the fun things they might get up to, think about what you can do for yourself to make sure you get something out of the experience. Go for drinks with a friend you’ve been meaning to see. Watch the entire season 3 of *Trueblood* back-to-back. If you’re on your own, you can make all the decisions, so do what you feel like. It’s hard to feel lime green jello when you’re having an awesome time doing your own thing.

## Get Real

Once you’ve had some time to wallow in misery and realise the up-sides, it could be time to think seriously about where you are. Are you still cranky and worried? My favourite jealousy buster is to write down all the emotions I’m feeling, and then all of the niggling thoughts that are making me scared. When you have a full list, work through each statement and consider it



seriously. Is it a rational thought? ‘I’m scared X will really like Y and have lots of fun hanging out with them.’ Don’t you have lots of fun hanging out with your friends or people you’re crushing on? Do those experiences really mean you enjoy hanging out with your partner less? ‘I’m scared X will like Y more than me.’ C’mon, really? Do parents like their second child more than the first? Do you always only have one kind of favourite person to hang out with? Appreciate your own qualities and recognise that your partner is with you for a reason.

## Get Involved

Make sure you meet your partner’s other partners or lovers. I can guarantee they will never be as terrifying beautiful, intelligent or sexy as you think. In all likelihood, they’re a pretty cool person, and you probably have a lot in common.

Also, if you’re feeling low, give yourself some extra time to hang out with your partner and remember that they’re really into you, as well. Talk about what an awesome job you’re doing together. And on bad days, remind yourself that you’ve chosen to be polyamorous for your own reasons, and that there are many benefits in store for you.

And there are many benefits. Being poly allows you to become responsible for meeting your own needs, and not rely on just one person to satisfy your emotional and sexual desires. And not only does this lead to a great sense of independence, it also opens you up to a diverse community of friends and lovers. Becoming a part of network of friends who will care for and support each other through thick and thin is an incredible experience, and far outweighs the occasional battle with the green eyed monster.



# The Lesbian Mafia

Alex McKinnon welcomes you to the Web of Death.

**It starts with someone you know;** a friend's friend's sister's girlfriend who's throwing a party in Enmore who'd just LOVE you to come. You acquiesce, eager to expand your social horizons. You arrive. There's a barbecue with veggie patties. Your awkwardness slowly caves under a barrage of rowdy friendliness and drinks from the ice-filled bathtub. Your inhibitions melt away. Someone announces it's time to go to the karaoke bar up the street. Egged on by a baying horde, you belt out a Meatloaf number and feel like a god. You wake up the next morning with fifteen new numbers in your phone, a blinding hangover, and the vague memory of someone doing upside-down situps while hanging by their Doc Martens from balcony scaffolding.

It has begun. Your card has been marked by an ancient and arcane organisation, as powerful as it is mysterious. It shapes the community and the people around it the way a child shapes Playdoh. I speak, dear reader, of the Mauve Hand, Vagina Dentata, the Muffia, but for clarity's sake and because I just made all of those up, let us call it the Web. I was drawn into its clutches a year ago, and I have decided to break my silence.

I am the beloved companion and mascot of a broad but closely-knit sub-family of lesbians. They provide me with companionship, wisdom and nights out of unparalleled debauchery; I let them play with my hair. Having been in their company for a year now, I can confidently say that the Web will strip you of every inconvenient scrap of innocence or country wholesomeness you may possess. Watching a poker-faced performer stoically staple cut-out paper penises onto her naked self in front of a salivating crowd will do that to a lad. It's become a favourite pastime of mine to escort bright-eyed North Shore kids to unfathomably seedy dyke bars for 'a quiet night out'. The looks on their little faces are worth the drinks I buy them.

PoliSci students looking for a thesis topic could do a lot worse than Sapphist power politics. If you get away with a PMS joke in public anywhere between Darlinghurst and Dulwich Hill, consider yourself lucky. The lesbians have tremendous economic sway; they have fingers in many pies (zing). They act as a bloc, punishing sloppy service and general arsehatery with iron fists. No shopkeeper can afford to lose the dyke trade; God help one foolish enough to neglect putting one of those little rainbow stickers in the window. Of course, many a bouncer and drunken bogan knows that the more muscular lesbians are forces to be reckoned with in their own right. These ladies are not looking for a man to have a threesome with, fellas; they can and will fuck you up, so hands to yourselves.

This monolithic unity does not, however, apply internally; student politics has



nothing on lesbian politics. It combines the Machiavellian scheming and factional warfare of State Parliament with the sexual tension of a Trueblood episode. One-on-one spats can escalate into full-on blood feuds in hours. I quickly learnt, like any weak, vulnerable creature, to adapt to best ensure my survival. I became an impartial sounding board, responding to even the most venomous bitching with a noncommittal 'mmm' and a sympathetic pat on the shoulder. As a result, I remain on good terms with all my lesbians, and my genitals remain intact.

All considerations of tainted love aside, the sheer conflict in the Web is sometimes staggering, especially amongst a group of people with the odds already stacked so high against them. Despite their status, the lesbian community is deeply fragile. Depression, harassment, discrimination, abuse and suicide are major problems, and yet out of these common ordeals comes a queer kind of strength. Adversity has forged a society of survivors, driven, accomplished people who are rightly proud of their success. They make courageous and idealistic journalists, passionate performance artists, out-and-proud sex workers, and deliciously sadistic airport customs officials. Our society is blessed for no longer being deprived of their vitality and verve.

Most importantly, the Web has an overwhelming sense of solidarity; no matter what the situation, one does not have to fight one's battles alone. When the call goes out, whatever the reason, they will answer. It's old-time, schoolboy rugby-type stuff, and it's their greatest strength. The Web reminds me of nothing so much as one of those old fashioned Italian families you see in pasta commercials. It is sprawling, anarchic and wildly dysfunctional, but at the same time bound by ties of extraordinary strength- intertwined histories of love, loss and hate, common struggles, collective triumphs and shared agonies. I count myself lucky to have seen the heart of this community, and it has been a privilege to try and capture its essence so it may be shared with others.

Welcome to the Family.

## Why not to say 'That's So Gay' Damien Costello says "no."

That's so gay! Think how many times you've heard this statement made in a week, or how many times you've said it yourself. Now ask yourself why do you say this when it is clearly very offensive? The answer is that you are misguided. Short and simple answer, I know. Due to the society you were brought up in, you believe that words like 'gay' can be used as a negative judgement, and when they are, that they're not directly related to gay people or the gay rights movement. Or, you're just a homophobe who thinks it's cool to make fun of people who are different from you... in which case, you might just be a lost cause.

Now you might be asking why it is wrong to say "that's so gay" when you disagree with something. Well the answer to that question is that "gay" is a positive affirmation of one's sexuality. By saying "That's so gay" when you mean "I don't agree with this on principle, because it is unfair/unjust/just plain fucked up" you are equating those people's sexualities to the above mentioned thing you believe is unfair/unjust/just plain fucked up. When you do this, not only are you attacking the thing you don't agree with, but you are also attacking the very identity of your gay friends.

Think of it as if you were to say "That's so (insert minority racial group here)" instead. If you said this most people would not like you. Most people in fact would feel disgusted and outraged to hear someone making such a racist remark. In fact you would probably be lucky to walk away from the room without being abused. Similarly, the same offence is felt by gay people when you insist that their sexuality is somehow less than yours, or is

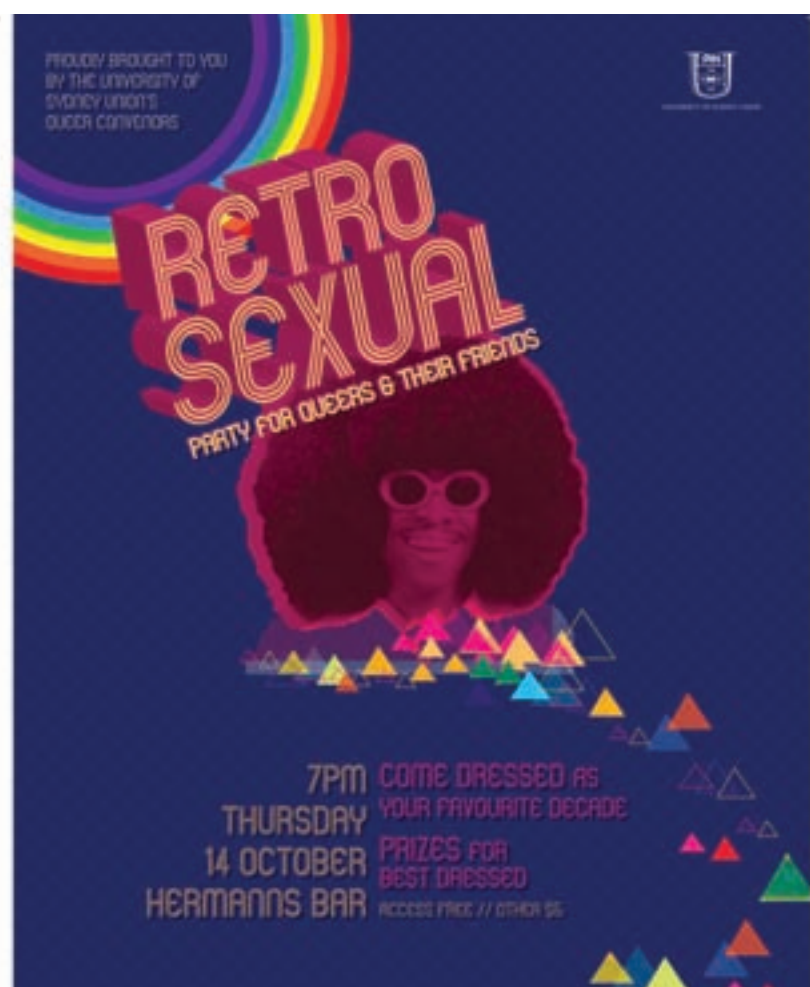
to be equated with something shit. How about instead of that you went with, "That's so female". Saying this would lose you lots of friends really quickly, and eventually replace those friends with a lynch mob. Now I'm not encouraging anyone to go around and be racist or sexist but the principle behind how you use the words is the same; words can hurt.

"But," I hear you say "when I say 'that's so gay' I'm really saying 'that's so ghey'". It's clearly spelt differently so I can't offend you." This is an alright theory, until I think about it for all of 3 seconds and realise the gaping holes in your logic. Like does this mean I will insult an African-American person by spelling the n-word with a silent k at the start? For some reason I don't think this is going to hold up.

"Well, your argument had convinced me that I was wrong" you say. Well thank you I had hoped it would. "But what do I say instead of 'that's so gay'?" Well you could try "that's so shit", "that's so crap" or "I don't agree with this on principle, because it is unfair/unjust/just plain fucked up". This way you won't be classed as a homophobic douchebag, and you will have lots more friends. Friends are nice.

Also, even if you do have a gay friend who says that they don't mind it when you use 'gay' in a derogatory sense, think about the tonnes of people you meet every day who could easily be affected by your offhand comment. There's no easy way of telling if someone is straight or gay, or if your language will prevent someone from feeling safe to come out. And just because I have a straight friend that doesn't mind when I call them a fuckwit, it doesn't mean I can call all straight people fuckwits and get away with it.

So stop saying it. It's not that hard to change and you'll feel all the better for doing it.





# Cutepllosion! - It's Josh Thomas

**Benjamin Veness** speaks with Josh Thomas, comedian and sex-symbol, about fangirls, sexuality and warm watermelons.

Josh Thomas is incredulous. His talk of vaginas' niftiness mid-way through his stand-up show *Surprise* consistently offends parents whose young children accompany them and their poor judgement to his performances. Speaking to him on the phone the next day, Josh's fast-paced, high-pitched cry flaunts his exasperation. "What makes you think a kid wants to watch someone talk for an hour, anyway?" he erupts. "Take him to the fucking Wiggles! Kids like colour and movement."

Shit might've got whack for real if this particular mother and her eight-year-old didn't exit when Josh started exploring vaginas. Later in *Surprise*, which closes this Saturday in Canberra, Josh explained that a DVD of the show was being shot and concern for its classification prohibited including a joke about jizzing on Justin Bieber's face. But don't take his fantasy the wrong way – Josh is not a devotee of Bieber.

Ironically, Josh's fan base probably is. One painful read of the 'Josh Thomas Official [Facebook] Page' quickly shows his coming out hasn't deterred the loony legion of teen and tween *girlz* infatuated with the comedian. An unexpected voice of reason, one Chelsea O'Neill, sums it up succinctly, "Your fans are creepy." These fans (and a surprisingly large number of adults) were out in force the school-night I saw his show, their presence made known when their squeals went up with the lights, instantly giving me flashbacks of his Wall.

Front of mind is Josh's recent status update, "Why do bars sometimes put videos of naked-ish models on the wall? It just reminds me how not hot I am," to which scores of instant responses ranged from Eloise Pelser's encouraging, "Josh, at your next performance, just yell at the

crowd 'Am I hot or what?'" The number of screaming fans should change your mind ;)” to Matt Ollett's less generous, "I think you look Jewish. So no for me," to Hayleigh Seager's optimistic and unscientific, "Maybe us chickies can turn josh straight cuz we just dat good u know wat i mean ;)" Chelsea was spot on. Asked about this busy page, Josh admits to not reading it, except sometimes the fights.

On stage, Josh relaxed from some initial nervous fidgeting with the microphone stand into his role as sole focus of the audience's attention, warming us with sympathy for his low body confidence, kindly sharing with the straight males in the audience that men's penises really aren't that big, and divulging that his elder brother is also gay. Asked about this afterwards, Josh says it made no difference to his coming out, knowing that his parents wouldn't care.

His father, Mike Thomas, was quoted extensively in the recent Good Weekend magazine article about Josh. Comments like 'Joshua' being "absolutely fearless" and having "an extremely effective understanding of what he wants to do in life" surprised the entertainer. Bemusedly, he remarked to me, "I've never heard my dad say that in my life." A reference to the sitcom he's supposedly writing for the ABC also furrowed his brow. "I'm not really writing it," he clarifies. "I'm kind of pitching it, sort of. I didn't want to over-hype it." In truth, there's no grand plan that Josh is working towards, instead following a sensible strategy of opportunism when presented with TV and stand-up proposals, "[I] try to say yes to the good ones and no to the shit ones."

The offer to tour *Surprise* was evidently a good one – his final performances at the Sydney Opera House sold out after a run that also took in Adelaide, Brisbane, Perth, Newcastle and Melbourne. Josh swears

that almost everything in the remarkably intimate show is true, and that ex-boyfriend Tom Ballard was perfectly happy with him including a story about Tom's casual peeing during their first mutual shower. In the concluding Q&A segment of *Surprise*, Josh somehow still drew laughs when he offered to sign posters in the foyer on the condition of no photos and that fans "don't fucking touch me!" He also had a tip for us: before having sex with a watermelon, warm it up in the microwave.

*Surprise has moved on to Canberra, but will be available from the iTunes Store later this year (joining a recording of his live performance at the 2009 Melbourne Fringe Festival, Things That I Have Said Before). For updates, join Josh on Facebook – Josh Thomas Official Page – but beware his fans' inane drivell!*



**Bob Katter on:**

## Coming Out

It all started when I was growing up. I was just like any other kid. I loved soccer, and nintendo, and lasagne. But deep down inside me were some feelings that just wouldn't go away. Feelings I wasn't proud of.

At first I thought that I was just biphobic, or phobic-curious. Everyone does, I guess. Anyway, eventually the feelings got to be too much to handle. So I started experimenting with strangers. At first I only did it online in chatrooms. I'd drop a hint, say something like 'u h8 gayz 2?' and then, if my partner was interested, we'd get straight into it. Of course, eventually I started getting involved with other homophobic boys at my school.

One boy in particular- Steve, his name was. Well, one thing leads to another, and before I knew it Steve had me taking up some really inflexible positions. Positions like zero tolerance on gay marriage, and the old 'no gays in my electorate' chestnut, back when it was my dirty little secret, before I learnt to take pride in the beautiful, joyous life choice that is homophobia.

Of course, it wasn't easy to get to the point where I could openly declare my homophobia on public radio stations. I still remember when I first came out to my dad: he said that he hadn't raised me to be a homophobe, that it wasn't natural to feel hatred toward my fellow man, that

he had failed as a father. I've never told him this, but I suspect my dad might be a bit of a closet homophobe as well! The worst was my mum: she just cried, then helped me pack my bags.

It was pretty bad for a while. Everywhere I went, as soon as people found out that I was a homophobe (and they always found out, sooner or later) they cast me out, labelled me 'evil' and 'disordered'. There was a point there when I thought 'This is it: I'm never going to find a place where I belong'. Until one day I found a House filled with people who thought exactly like me. It was like a huge family, all of them completely accepting of my homophobic way of life. And just between you and me,

I've found some guys here, like Fred Nile, who've shown me some homophobic legislative positions that I would've blushed at the thought of in my younger, more bashful years!

So if you're a homophobe, and you're afraid to come out in case you're rejected by your family, or your friends, or your electorate, just remember: there's a place for every homophobe in this great nation of ours.

It's called parliament.

Tom Lyle Marr



# Cisinformation

“Cis” has as nothing to do with scissoring. Well, actually, it does, because it comes from the same root word, but it also means something only tangentially related to the act of tribadism. **William Wallace** explains

Woooo! Cis! The shiny new word of the now! If you hang around queers, or like, read *Queer Honi* (like you are, right. now. HOLYFUCKCREEPY), you will probs run into the word cis, and its derivations cispender, cissexual, cissexist, etc. So, like, while you’ve been doing the magical osmoting of meaning since you’ve been a small child, an explanation of what these words mean could also be useful! And here one conveniently is (WOWSTILLKINDACREEPY)!

Cis, at its most basic level, means not trans\*. It’s a neutral term, unlike, for instance, “normal” or “not trans\*”, which both position cis people as the default

and trans\* people as an Other. Since the othering of trans\* people is kind of a big issue for trans\* activists, they’ve been slowly propagating the word since what my sources (the deeply amazing [deeplyproblematic.com](http://deeplyproblematic.com) tell me has been the mid-nineties. Cispender and cissexual are both expansions of the word, but like transgender and transsexual, these have discreetly different meanings. For simplicity, and cos cis people tend to be both cispender AND cissexual, cis is the general way to go.

Cis is a descriptor, and true to its activist roots, it’s not so much defining the genders of the people it describes (there is as much a cis spectrum as there is a variety of trans\* identities) but defining shared experiences of privilege. That is, if you’re cis, you self identify with the sex and gender you were assigned at birth, and you get given a bunch of social and legal bonuses because of this. One, for instance, might be not having to jump through a bunch of hoops to

correct an inaccurate recording of your gender. “But I’m a man!” the cis man will say to the person at the RTA! And they’ll fix it WITHOUT HIM HAVING TO CONVINCE A PSYCHOLOGIST THAT HE IS, IN FACT, A MAN.

Because of this, the term tends to be fiercely resisted by people that don’t like the idea that they’ve been given arbitrary privileges, or who feel that their being oppressed in other, non-trans\* related ways trumps their experiences of cis privilege. Over the past couple of years, there have been a series of internet and conference arguments that largely fit along the lines of “Hey, cis privilege kind of fucks over trans and genderqueer people” -> “I DON’T CALL MYSELF CIS, YOU CAN’T PICK THE WORDS I IDENTIFY WITH, I’M NOT TRANS BUT I’M NOT CIS, I AM A SPECIAL FLOWER, BUT A SPECIAL FLOWER WHO IS ALSO NORMAL.” This is of course hugely dull and annoying, cos cis isn’t an

identity. Some people do find it useful to identify as cis as part of a practice to denaturalise and acknowledge their privilege, but the pile of legal and social bonuses you get just cos you aren’t trans aren’t things that you can just disidentify with. Cis people do, of course, have complex and multi-layered gender identities, and most of those aren’t going to fall into the boxes of normative masculinity and normative femininity perfectly. But part of acknowledging the complexity of our identities means noticing when those identities do by us privileges off the backs of other people, and that’s what the term cis is there to do.

## The Same-Sex Adoption Bill

**Paul Karp** discusses same-sex adoption with **Sen Raj** of the Gay and Lesbian Rights Lobby.

On September 2 the NSW Legislative Assembly narrowly passed a bill granting same-sex couples the same rights under adoption law as homosexual individuals and heterosexual couples.

In 1997 the New South Wales Law Reform Commission recommended that legislation permit adoption either by couples, irrespective of the sex, marital status or sexuality of the partners; or by individuals. The then Government accepted the other recommendations of the Law Reform Commission in its Adoption Bill 2000 but excluded adoption by same-sex couples. At the time Clover Moore, independent member for Bligh, moved amendments that would have included same-sex couples, but the changes were defeated by the two major parties.

“Sexuality is not a meaningful indicator of parenting ability”

In 2008 there was an inquiry into same-sex adoption by the Legislative Council Committee on Law and Justice, which recommended amending the adoption bill. The Keneally Government originally said they would not change it, but Clover Moore introduced a private members bill at end of June. This bill passed, albeit

with a few modifications: an exception for faith based providers, such as Anglicare and Catholicare; and a provision that exempts adoption from anti-discrimination legislation, allowing a non-binding preference to be expressed by the parents giving a child up for adoption that their child not be adopted by a same-sex couple.

According to Sen Raj, policy and development coordinator at the Gay and Lesbian Rights Lobby, this was “the last direct discrimination against same-sex couples in State legislation”. But the true significance of the bill, according to Mr Raj, is not as a gay rights issue but rather that it advances the wellbeing of adopted children. It does so in two ways: firstly this reform was “urgently needed to recognize the 1500 children living in same sex families in NSW,” whose rights on issues like custody and child support were compromised by having only one of those parents legally recognised.

Secondly, it makes merit the only criteria for couples seeking to adopt even in the case of unknown adoption in which the child is not already living in foster care with that family. Merit should be the only criteria, said Mr Raj, because “sexuality is not a meaningful indicator of parenting ability” and the only thing that matters is “your objective merits to provide a loving and stable home for a child.” This was a sentiment echoed in the parliamentary debate by parliamentarians including Pru Goward, who noted; “heterosexuality has no monopoly on parenting.”

The bill passed with some support from both sides of politics. In addition to Pru Goward, other Coalition members supported the bill, many of whom Mr Raj singled out for praise including Opposition Leader Barry O’Farrell, who spoke about the significant contribution to society of same-sex couples; Catherine Cusack of the Liberal Party and Trevor Cann of the National Party. From the Labor side Mr Raj commented that Linda Burney, Minister for Community Services; the Premier Kristina Keneally; and Penny Sharp spoke particularly well.

Mr Raj attributes the success of the bill to a number of factors, such as the growing weight of evidence, including medical, psychological and sociological studies such as those done by the American Academy of Paediatrics, showing no harm is done to children by being in these families. Over time the growing number of children living in same-sex families with one legally unrecognized parent, along with the hypocrisy of allowing same-sex couples to be foster parents and for homosexual people to adopt but only as individuals led to this latest legal change. To these contextual factors must be added the tireless lobbying of organisations like the Gay and Lesbian Rights Lobby and their representatives like Sen Raj, who noted with delight that after personally lobbying many parliamentarians their speeches reflected his contributions on behalf of the gay and lesbian community.

Predictably, there were opponents of the bill, but very few relied on homophobic

arguments, with the exceptions of David Clarke and Fred Nile, whose speeches Mr Raj described as “apocalyptic”. Instead, opponents such as Rob Stokes argued that in the case of unknown adoption “gender complementarity” is needed, ie that it is better to have both a mother and a father. Many may still find this argument problematic since it relies on essentialist views of gender, but it was heartening to Mr Raj that overtly homophobic arguments are no longer socially acceptable.

“Heterosexuality has no monopoly on parenting”

Another positive sign for the future is the media reaction. Mr Raj commented “I must say the media reaction to this has been very positive.” Major news outlets Fairfax and News Ltd both had generally positive coverage of the bill, which is important because makes it more likely parliamentarians will support such initiatives in the future.

New South Wales is now one of three states that allows same-sex couples the same adoption rights as heterosexual couples, the other two are WA and the ACT. Tasmania allows step parent adoption only for same-sex couples. It is likely now that this recent success is the start of a trend that will see similar changes in all states of Australia. The Victorian Law Reform Commission has recommended that their adoption legislation also be changed.



# Declassification

norrie mAy-welby puts your name down, flips it, and reverses it.

Humans have done a lot of classifying of each other in order to exploit each other. It's hard to eat someone if they are classified the same as you, but the moment you class your own tribe as human and those of other tribes as not so human, you have a lot more food available.

Those of the ruling class, the inheritors of those who thieved the right to a free livelihood from your ancestors, benefited from the division of labour of those working in their factories and those rearing the next generation of employees.

But this classification is not respectful of human dignity.

I was four years old when I realised my mother was utterly absurd in claiming I could not play with my cousin's dolls. My cousin was classed as a girl, while I was classed as a boy. The unseen physical difference between us seemed irrelevant to me, especially compared to the power gap between both of us and the monstrous adults. My mirror neurons told me there was nothing essentially different between me and my cousin. The adults I was physically dependent on made many ridiculous attempts to enforce a normative sex classification onto me, from smacking me for crying, to not allowing me to learn typing. Their slavish devotion to sex roles did not give me a high level of respect for their intelligence.

When I became interested in sex, I realised it was illegal for me, thanks to the classification system and the prohibition against same-sex sex. Many of those

prohibitions have now been repealed, in many western countries at least, thanks to the tireless work of many people who actively believed in social justice. Marriage, however, remains forbidden for those classed as same sex, even in this supposedly relatively enlightened country, while homosexuality is actively prosecuted in many countries we trade with.

The enforcement of prohibitions based on sex classification creates a slave class of women in fundamental and sexist societies, victimises people classed as same sex attracted, and butchers babies who don't fit the standard sex classifications until they do fit, after years of invasive surgeries to their genitals as children, and the administration of animal or synthetic sex hormones often without the child's knowledge or consent.

The binary breaks down in so many places, but those in charge of the armed forces in society go to excessive measures to paper over the cracks in their delusion that everyone is of one of two classes of human. People are allowed to change gender, but only to transition neatly and unambiguously from one of the two main classification to the other. Transsexuals have their new sex paid for and recognised by the state in Iran, while homosexuals have a wall pushed on them, all to remove evidence of any space between or variation from masculine males and feminine females.

I bought the binary lie for a while, decades ago, when I was diagnosed as transsexual and prescribed synthetic and horse hormones, and had a sex change

op, but of course, it did not change my reproductive sex from male to female, merely remove reproductive sex, and give me an androgynous physique, which, as it turns out, suits my androgynous psyche.

I am sick of the lies, and the crimes carried out to support the lies, that everyone is male or female. I petitioned the authority claiming to be the government of New South Wales to recognise that I exist as an adult without being specifically male or female. (I qualify their claim to be a government, as almost every system I encounter is governed by forces and principles other than the humans who claim to be in charge of them. So-called "governments" do not govern either my breath or the sunrise, and their claimed authority is but vaingloriousness.)

This government initially recognised my sex classification to be unclassifiable in binary terms, "Non specific", as the medical authorities certified, "Not Specified" as the government issued certificate stated. When others discovered this case when I went public after a month, they thought about the consequences for their systems so dependent on an enforcement of the fictitious sex binary, and claimed the certification had been made in error, for even the people who changed their whole computer system to issue my certificate apparently now realise people can only ever be male or female, regardless of any conflicting evidence. It's too late to stop the idea now. The genie is out of the bottle, and the sky didn't fall or society grind to a halt in the

month I had my certificate and changed my sex to "Not Specified" with various other state and federal government agencies and my financial institution. It was not just the result of my own efforts either, for it was the result of years of education and activism by many against the tyrannies of imposing a compulsory sex binary on everybody. Other people and groups around the world are calling for similar freedom from an imposed lie.

No matter what or how much I have to do to proceed with this legally, I will win my case again sooner or later. I have nothing to lose, save the stain on the soul from agreeing to a lie that makes many people miserable and turns infants into medical experiments. This is an idea whose time has come. Like abolishing slavery two hundred years ago, and ending the prohibition on women voting a hundred years ago, and ending the criminalisation of same sex thirty years ago, it is time to stop insisting that every human be classified male or female and given different privileges based on how they and their personal relationships fit a clearly opposing sex scheme, and well past time to stop butchering babies to fit into one of two approved roles.

Civilisation requires that we agree that every human has equal rights, and not impose with the state apparatus the various old power un-sharing schemes that may have been better than the even worse regimes they replaced, but are still an offense to human dignity.

## Services for queer people

**ACON** has a number of services including programs targeted at same sex attracted men and women under 26 years, counselling for all queers, and support for people living with HIV.  
www.acon.org.au  
Ph: 9206 2000  
9 Commonwealth street, Sydney

**Gay and Lesbian Counselling service** provides phone counselling for queer people.  
Ph: 8594 9596 seven days between 5.30 and 10.30  
Lesbian line: 8594 9595 Monday night 6.30 to 9.30

**Gender Centre** provides services for people with variant gender identities. This includes groups, counselling and referral services.  
www.gendercentre.org.au  
Ph: 9569 2366 from 9am to 4.30pm  
7 Bent street Petersham, Sydney

**Scarlet Alliance** is the peak representative body for sex workers in Australia.  
www.scarletalliance.org.au  
Ph: 9326 9455

## Wear It Purple Day

October 15 is Wear It Purple Day. Please make and wear a purple arm band to show support for queer teens at risk.

For young Australians, suicide is the second most common cause of death after traffic accidents. It's reported that 30% of gay, bisexual or transgender teens will attempt suicide in Australia in 2010. This is a shocking statistic and a disgraceful state of affairs for a country that reports to give people "a fair go".

Last week, we were all reminded of this ongoing tragedy when a teenage American student, Tyler Clementi, was driven to take his life because his sexuality was not respected. He was the 4th US teenager to suicide that week, all horrendously bullied because of their sexuality.

My name is Katherine and I'm a 17 year old high school student. At my school most teachers and students respect each other's sexuality even if it is different to their own. But kids at some other schools are not so lucky. Their difference is not respected, fingers are pointed and kids are bullied. I believe something has to be done.

This situation of intolerance and ignorance cannot continue. It shouldn't matter whether you're gay, straight, bisexual, transgender or whatever. Young bright people are having their future and dreams cruelly ripped away from them by this endemic hate in our society.

In Australia, on average 2500 people commit suicide each year. Although the rate of suicide has fallen in the last decade, still over 200 young people aged 15-24 will suicide this year. Suicide accounts for about 20% of youth deaths and gay youth are on the government's high risk list for suicides. Australia's attitude of ignorance or "she'll be right mate" to mental health contributes to our kids feeling hated and alone.

Cyber-bullying is a new form of hate crime described by the Australian Institute of Criminology as crime that sends "a message of fear and terror based in bigotry". Unlike playground bullying where their oppressors can be left behind at the school gate, cyber-bullying follows children home and into their bedrooms. These kids are hurt 24/7, and yet society stands idly by? We have to stop this.

By wearing a purple arm band you're showing support for queer youth. It doesn't matter how you do it: tie it, draw it, lipstick it or tattoo it. Wear purple to tell these kids they're accepted and not alone. We need to take action to change society's attitude and stop the deaths.

So please make and wear a purple arm band on Friday October 15 to support queer teens at risk. You can also befriend us on Facebook or follow us on Twitter.

Facebook: Wearit Purple  
Twitter: WearItPurple



# Queers and Religion:

## Strange Bedfellows or Irreconcilably Divorced?

Tommy Berne

### Religion's "fundamentals"

What is it that we are talking about when we describe the abhorrent acts committed in the name of religious fundamentalism? We can describe the actions of the Westboro Baptist Church in the United States as being a perversion of the message of Jesus as told through the bible. However, a casual look through the books of Leviticus or Deuteronomy of the Old Testament will deliver a wealth of information to back up their views. Similarly we may look at fundamentalist Islam in order to try and understand people of this religion who would martyr themselves in the name of Allah. Such actions can only be rendered as something capable of being performed by a reasonable human in the context of the religious ideology that claims the reality of life after death with heavenly rewards.

I point to religious fundamentalism(s) as clear examples of the negative effect religious belief can have on the world. I do not mean to group each separate religious denomination into this same category, nor do I wish to imply that my religious reader's personal faith (whatever that may be) would contain beliefs that justify these actions. I'm sure most people of more moderate faith would equally decry the actions of extremists; even going so far as to say that they are a misinterpretation of their chosen religious text. Although, it begs the question as to why a more

secular version of belief is preferable to a more literal interpretation. I simply point to these "fundamentalists" as examples of people who use these texts as justification and that through these texts this justification can be found – in abundance.

At best many religions are not accepting of queers, at worst many religions would call for the death penalty for the "crime" of same-sex love or gender transgression. In 2007, Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, speaking to Columbia University, said that there are no homosexuals in Iran. However we may interpret his remark the underlying bigotry remains clear. In Iran, under Shari'a law, homosexual acts are punishable by death. According to The Boroumand Foundation, there are records of at least 107 executions with charges related to homosexuality between 1979 and 1990.

In July 2005 Iran executed two teenage boys named Mahmoud Asgari and Ayaz Marhoni in Mashhad, which drew international attention when disturbing photos of the hanging were distributed around the Internet. This was widely condemned as the murder of minors for the crime of homosexuality, although it is disputed whether the executions were due to consensual sex relations or rape. Now, of course, it's far too easy to look at human rights abuses due to religious orthodoxy in places like Iran or any of the other 85 (according to

the International Gay and Lesbian Association statistics for 2007) countries in which homosexual acts are illegal.

Iran is particularly interesting for its views regarding trans\* people. Surprisingly enough trans\* people have been officially recognised by the Iranian government and allowed to undergo sexual reassignment surgery. Due to this Iran carries out more sex change operations than any country in the world apart from Thailand. The government also provides up to half the cost and the change is noted on their birth certificate. On the surface this sounds as though it is quite a progressive step for what is otherwise a government with views better suited to the dark ages. However, upon closer examination we can see the problematic gender binary being enforced. If trans\* people choose not to have surgery they put themselves at risk of being punished as a homosexual and accordingly sentenced to death. This denies the very idea of "same-sex" attraction - "There are no homosexuals in Iran."

### So how does something like Iran affect us here in Australia?

Firstly it should shock us all that our fellow human beings are being treated so unjustly, no matter where they are. Secondly it shows the brutal application

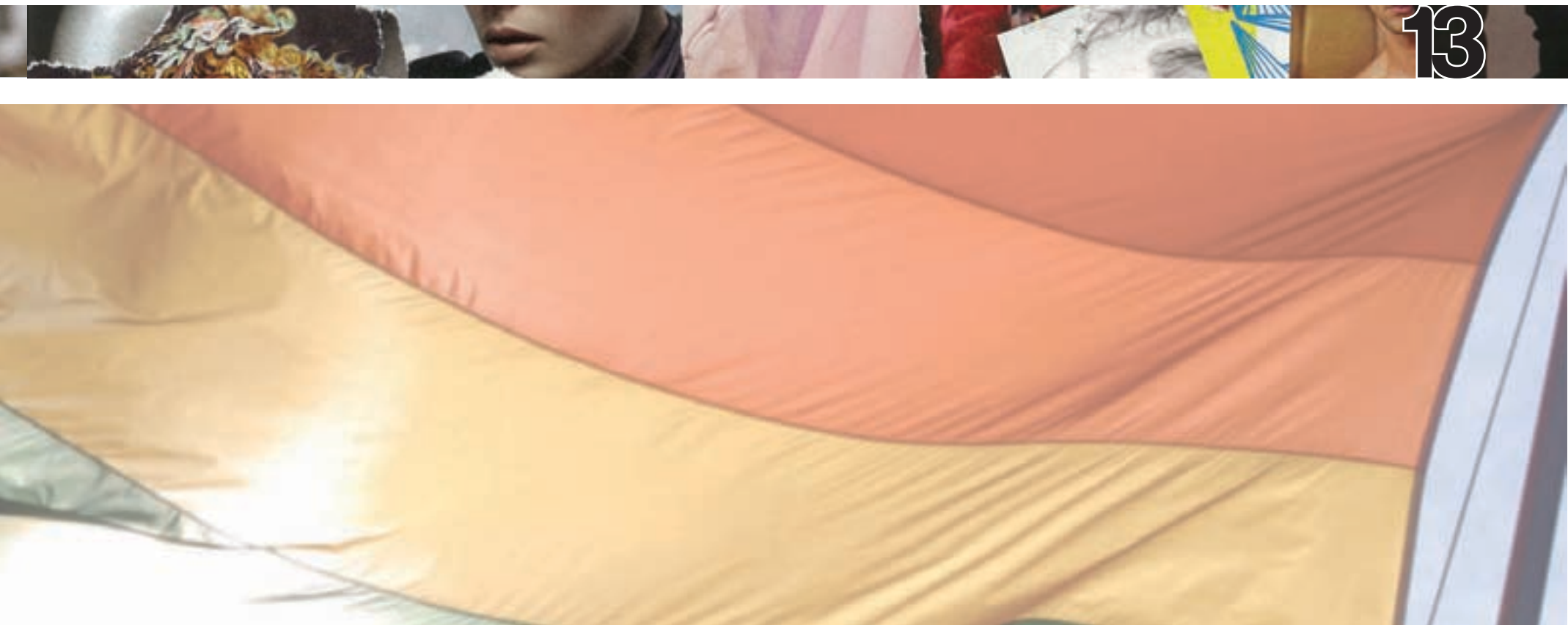
of religious doctrine when it is allowed to become part of government. Thirdly it should reinforce our own values of liberal democracy and desire for a secular state.

Fundamentalist Islam, as based on a literalist (or "Islamist") reading of the Qu'ran, does not see a separation of church and state. By looking to Iran we can see the perils of following this path. Similarly the New Testament of Christianity makes no claims about how to run a state and as such is a more individually-focused religion. However, this does not seem to stop people from feeling that Christian religion has a place in government. It's this "reading between the lines" of religious texts that can cause a lot of damage that would otherwise be avoided by a secular government.

Even outside of direct governmental control religions exert a powerful influence over shaping laws and influencing popular belief. Throughout Africa the Catholic church's blanket ban on the use of condoms has directly contributed to untold levels of suffering and devastation. In 2001, as head of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), Peter Piot spoke out against the church's policy saying "We do not ask the church to promote contraception, but merely to stop banning its use." More recently Pope Benedict has continued this stance – going so far as to say that condom use would *increase* the spread of HIV in Africa.







The Catholic church teaches that abstinence is the only method of preventing the spread of HIV. While this is assuredly a certain method, it is clear that it is not one that accurately takes into account human behaviour. By preventing the use of condoms they are *knowingly* allowing the spread of HIV to continue unabated. Added to this is the implicit moral condemnation that the people affected by this disease have brought it upon themselves due to sin. If that isn't evil then the word evil has no meaning.

While AIDS-in-Africa isn't a direct example of religion hurting queers, it is the underlying assumption here that does damage. The idea that sex is sacred and between a man and a woman (usually monogamous) is common throughout Christianity and underlies their anti-queer bias.

## Why we should be sceptical of religion.

Religions teach many virtues such as tolerance, compassion, respect and purity. However, a secular state does not require a person's individual faith to be given up nor necessitate atheism (although this is a viable alternative.) It does not incorporate the existence or non-existence of God. As reasonable adults studying at university, we are in a privileged position and uniquely able to question our beliefs and

customs. As such we should be sceptical of our beliefs and examine them for instances where they may discriminate against groups of people and lead to systematic oppression.

Even subtle forms of discrimination and prejudice, whether racial or directed at a minority group such as queers, have been shown to have a deleterious effect on the mental health of those who are subject to this discrimination. The high rate of suicide for queer youth – especially in rural Australia where prejudice is more prevalent – is testament to the real effects of this relationship. When being sceptical of our religious beliefs we should take into account the prejudices incorporated in them and make moves to minimise their effects. This should be reflected in personal behaviour and talked about to friends, family and our church groups.

## Why moderate religion hurts Queers.

It is clear that religions and queers have had an uneasy truce in many relatively secular nations. It is true that many religions have become more tolerant over the years, with some religious denominations even allowing openly gay and female priests. In Australia we can openly discuss the possibility of gay marriage and the (somewhat dubious) idea of assimilating into the church.

While discrimination and prejudice are fairly concrete examples of the ways

in which religion hurts queers, there is a more insidious dimension contained within religious texts. This comes in the form of the notion of a gender binary. Although religion is not a monolithic construct, it shares many attributes between all of its variations that are worthy of critical examination. When abrahamic religions talk of “men” and “women” it is normalising an essentialist notion of gender that does not fit everybody. Trans\* and intersex people are therefore excluded, denied the ability to exist – even as a concept. This is not due to any action or desire but simply because their existence is not recognised within the homogenising effects of religious doctrine.

OK- so what about more moderate religious people? Should queers work together with the more moderate churches? What's the harm? Do we have allies in places such as the Anglican church that wants to allow gay and women priests? Are they challenging oppression?

The answer here is a resounding “No!”. Queers are found wherever there is heteronormative systematic oppression - because queers are its antithesis. Queer identities are opposed to essentialist notions of gender and as such are intrinsically incompatible with most religion. Even the more liberal churches proscribe the same teachings about essentialist notions of gender. While many are more tolerant of queer issues their adherence to a similar doctrine tacitly allows for their more conservative

brethren to exist. In addition, there exists a subtle prejudice implicit in the very notion of “tolerance.” Clearly this has a harmful effect on those who are to be “tolerated” rather than accepted for what and who they are.

If queers were to accept more moderate religions we would simply be allying ourselves with a more secularised version of faith; maintaining all the problems that faith contains. Why not take the final step and divorce ourselves from religious institutions? We can be Good without God.





## A little bit Shade-y?

Martin Wylie critically examines Shades:

Politics on campus has undergone something of a transformation over the previous decades. No longer concerned with ending war, poverty, discrimination or oppression, politics within our university hallways, lectures theaters and clubs and societies is now almost solely about the accrual and accumulation of cultural capital, and furtherance of self-interested individuals. This unfortunately has become the (political) philosophy which underpins the inner workings of Shades, a new LGBTI group which markets itself as ‘apolitical’ and ‘all fun’ according to its website.

Many observations and criticisms need mentioning in relation to Shades. Firstly, one cannot help question just exactly how ‘apolitical’ this organisation really is, especially when considering the demographics or social composition of this group. Given also the overt display of pretentiousness and pomposity (something that certainly isn’t in short supply at USYD) shown thus far by Shades alongside its members, I can only conclude this group is almost

wholeheartedly a political group, albeit in a subtle and more invidious manner. Shades comprises mostly of USU elites and students belonging to law and commerce faculties. These members have little to absolutely no interest whatsoever in queer culture. Instead, they seem interested only in furthering their own political careers, and enhancing their cultural and social capital, both on and off campus. At risk of initiating an unhealthy dialogue, I’ll refrain from naming names or citing individuals, at least at this point.

A few months ago I attended their launch party, hosted quite ironically in the well-off Eastern suburbs. The degree of snobbery and superciliousness was arrant. In fact, the event seemed to symbolise an extolment and elation of egos, rather than an inclusive party or social-gathering which actually celebrated and revered queer cultural. Recently, I also learnt the group hosted a tea-party, involving unsurprisingly a guest speaker from Goldman Sachs – a wealthy, scandalous and corrupt investment bank in the United States. This naturally begs

This year saw the formation of a new “queer” group on campus called Shades. Shades has run a number of successful events and has been widely accepted as a new force for queer expression. Yet all is not well in the land of Queer and Shades has met its share of criticism. Here’s two of the sides to the story.

the question, to whom does Shades really cater for, and under what pretense?

As an Arts & Science student who grew-up in the desolate, outer suburbs of Melbourne – and still, despite my best efforts to escape my geo-social origins, proudly call myself an earthy ‘suburbanite’ – I was amazed to see how exactly one social-minority can simultaneously exclude, prejudice and malign another social-minority. This is precisely what Shades does, and perhaps why Shades cannot be described as apolitical. Shades is just as heavily engaged in practices or marginalisation and disenfranchisement as say the Jesuits or Christian societies. It merely substitutes one site of oppression with another, and illustrates the way in which the term queer becomes a fashionable ‘identity platform’ or ‘marketing ploy’ for self-discerning individuals. On a deeper and more treacherous level, the behaviour of Shades reinforces a discriminatory culture of misogyny, which is akin to the ‘brotherly-like’ fraternities of Wesley College or the USYD Rugby team(s).

Another hypocrisy from this self-description of ‘apolitical’ also arises. This point, I concede however, may only have familiarity with literature and cultural zealots like myself. The act or notion of apoliticisation is inconceivable without some reference and incorporation of politics. Shades therefore must, in order to construct its own (supposed) neutrality, must embody the very structures which underpin its (purported) opposite. To illustrate this point, and finalise my remarks, I’ll quote cultural theorist Jacques Derrida, who noteworthy writes:

*“...the center, which is by definition unique, constituted the very thing within a structure which while governing the structure, escapes structurality...the center is, paradoxically, within the structure and outside it... the totality has its center elsewhere. The center is not the center...”*

# Shades

**Richard Sawyer**, current president of Shades, responds:

Like it or not, there has been a total revolution in Queer activities on campus in 2010. This is the result of the very visible arrival of the two first ever USU clubs dedicated to Queer students: Sydney University Shades and the Sydney University Queer Revue Society. I write as the President of the former, and the Sponsorship Director (and cast member) of the latter.

The idea behind Shades is a simple one – though finding the perfect words to encapsulate it is difficult. We have in the past described ourselves as ‘apolitical’ – though, we now tend to say ‘non activist’.

Some have pointed out that by being proud of GLBT persons we are inherently political. The answer to that is very simple. To the extent that we promote the acceptance and love for GLBT persons, yes, we are political. Beyond that, we don’t care if you vote left wing, right wing or donkey; we don’t care if you march in rallies or have never read a newspaper – that is simply not what we are about. Instead, we put our efforts into creating a fun and welcoming space in which GLBT persons can socialise together and with

their straight friends and non-identifying friends.

And the fact is, Shades has been met by incredible enthusiasm from an enormously varied body of students. In the seven months since O-Week we have had over 500 people sign up to our mailing list, thousands of visits to our website, and most of our events have sold out. I have personally been touched by the stories of students who have told me that they have, until now, been too intimidated to attend any Queer events on campus – many of them from rural areas, living away from home, and with little support. I have been so glad to see these people make their first Queer friends.

I believe our success points to the fact that there was a genuine gap in Queer student life prior to our inception. This results from the fact that an organisation cannot be everything to everybody and that, while the SRC Queer Collective has a longstanding and impressive history, it cannot satisfy the needs of all GLBT students. I see Shades and the Queer Revue as important contributions to an already rich Queer culture at the University of Sydney – and as supplementing, rather than competing with, the activities of the Queer Collective.

Starting these initiatives from scratch has not been an easy task and we are far from perfect, especially being such a young organisation. However, any claim that Shades is comprised of Union impresarios and dominated by Law and Commerce students is patently

ridiculous. Our current executive does contain two Law students, but it also contains two Arts students, two Science students and one Commerce student – a healthy mix. We have no Union Board members on our Executive since David Mann resigned last semester – though, I do not understand why a Union Board member would be considered an inherently bad force in any event.

Worse and even more misguided are claims that Shades is misogynistic. Of our seven executive members, three are female, including our talented vice-president, Katherine Sherrie. We have identified at several public general meetings that connecting more fully with the lesbian community is a high priority for Shades. In this respect, we have worked closely with the female-identifying Queer officer, Ella Bailey, to institute a number of initiatives designed to make our society more attractive to women.

Last, Shades did recently hold an event in partnership with Goldman Sachs, one of the world’s largest financial services firms. The main aim behind this event was for Goldman Sachs to discuss their GLAM Network – a network dedicated to promoting diversity in the workplace. The event was also dedicated to discussing The Pinnacle Foundation – an organisation that raises money to fund scholarships for GLBT young people who are experiencing financial difficulty as a result of their GLBT status. The Goldman Sachs Foundation has recently partnered with this organisation and wanted to share

information about available scholarships with students.

I cannot speak for the Queer Revue in the same way that I can speak for Shades, but I believe that the arrival of the Queer Revue is unquestionably the biggest Queer cultural event that Sydney University has ever seen. The Revue celebrated the talents and culture of Queer students, and the response was huge – with three of the four shows selling out.

Shades worked in support of Queer Revue from the beginning, hosting a fundraiser for the show where the delightful Hung Divas performed in all their 70s sequined glory.

I am greatly pleased to announce that the Queer Revue made a significant profit and, accordingly, is able to donate \$2000 to ACON’s 25for5 project, helping to tackle homophobic violence, provide vital services for people with HIV, improve the mental health of GLBT and HIV+ people, provide lesbian health services and improve aged care for GLBT and HIV+ people.

It has been my great pleasure to be involved with both of these two societies, and I have been humbled by the endless energy and heart that my peers have committed to their respective jobs. We are looking forward to a big end of semester party at Shades – as well as a new year with a packed calendar, and the second Sydney University Queer Revue.



# The Invisible Queer

Anon

When asked once whether he was gay or straight, playwright Alan Bennett replied that asking that question was ‘a bit like asking a man crawling across the Sahara whether he would prefer Perrier or Malvern water’. Imparting this anecdote to a friend recently, I was asked what it meant, and for the life of me I could not reply intelligibly. Try as I might, I can never fully articulate it. It is a thought, however, to which I often return.

I have often felt that declaring one’s sexuality in certain terms is like being offered a choice between expensive mineral waters after being lost in the desert, when all you really want and need is whatever liquid can be spared. For so long you have gone without, and suddenly, laughably, someone is offering you a choice between luxuries. The danger has passed: supplies are plentiful here, even though five minutes before you had resigned yourself to a slow and painful death. Your struggle is rendered insignificant.

Perhaps I feel this way because I am neither gay nor straight. If pressed, or for the sake of convenience, I identify

myself as bisexual. I am loath to identify even in that camp, but it works well as an explanation (and at times, an invitation). For the most part, I go about my business as normal, making comments about men and women and letting people think what they will. My invisibility is both a blessing and a curse.

In a home in which homosexuality is considered a disorder, it is an almost physical relief to be able to bring a boy home and introduce him as my boyfriend, and to be able to talk about having real attraction to men. On the other hand, the idea of bringing home or discussing women is beyond terrifying. My parents may not have liked my last boyfriend, but they did not sob profusely, and then remain tersely silent on the issue for years after we broke up - that treatment was reserved for an earlier relationship. It happened to be with a girl.

My reactions to assumptions of my heterosexuality range from amusement to frustration, and yet I can have the same reactions to assumptions that I am a lesbian. I react poorly to assumptions, in general. Clearly, though, I also

exploit them: I am much quicker to recount stories about men than about women, and will happily let those with whom I am guarded believe I am nothing but completely heterosexual. I am a paradoxical brat, always wanting to have my cake and eat it too.

It is not, however, because my ‘bisexuality’ is any more of a choice than anyone else’s sexual orientation. Any choice lies entirely in decisions about my public sexual expression. There are moments when I have hidden behind heterosexual behaviour. I can understand why this could be offensive to some. I am only human, and I will do what I can to keep on keeping on. I do not aim to offend. I hope unremittingly that one day I am brave enough to step out from behind the cover I have cultivated for so long. Right now I just want to live to tell the tale. Perrier or Malvern? I’ll take whatever I need to survive.



## Review: The Kids are Alright

Set in an idyllic Southern Californian suburb, ‘The Kids Are Alright’ is a film about the complexities of marriage and the perils and perfections of relationships. In the film, Annette Bening and Julianne Moore play a middle aged lesbian couple (Jules and Nic)— affectionate, bickering, slightly passive-aggressive in that way of new-age couples whose vocabulary outstrips their emotions (“Go easy on the wine honey” and “Same goes for the micro-managing”) — with two teenage kids, Joni and Laser, played by Mia Wasikowska and Josh Hutcherson, who decide to look up their biological sperm-donor dad. Played by Mark Ruffalo, he is a proud college drop out who has opened his own organic restaurant, and oozes casual, unkempt virility. Ruffalo’s great at bringing out the charm of immature boy-men who are rough at the edges. As he continues to slither his way into the lives of the protagonists of the film, we also see a man toying

with the playfulness of fatherhood but shunning the responsibility. And the damage he inflicts on this cozy, tight-knit family is as devastating as the unit’s attempts to regroup are touching. Director Lisa Cholodenko and co-writer Stuart Blumberg have crafted a story of connections made and connections gone awry with wit, warmth, and wisdom. And near the end of the film, Jules gives a heartfelt, unrehearsed speech to her family in an attempt to remind them that while they are not perfect, perhaps she more than others in that moment, they are a family and have made a commitment to one another. As she addresses them, she says that marriage is dirty, hard and ugly. Her face is filled with desperation and her words couldn’t be harder to hear. ‘The Kids are Alright’ is one of this year’s most honest and authentic films.

Cindy Chong

## queerdoku

1			4		9			5
	4	3					1	
8			1		3	4		
5				7	1			4
	1			9			8	
7			6	3				1
		1	3		6			8
	8					1	4	
2			7		8			9

**Difficulty:** Depends how Queer you are.

## Where's My Queer Space?

Jed Coppa isn't too sure.

After visiting a friend at Macquarie Uni and being shown their well located, stylish and inclusive queer space I thought I'd grab a straight (but not narrow) friend and go hunting for Usyd's queer space which I'd heard was buried deep in the bowels of the Holme Building.

Our trip was partially successful; I did manage to locate the queer space and I did end up with a chai latte from the courtyard cafe (disappointingly sachet, but now I stock the same sachets at home, and for a sixth of the price!) but after heading down the creaky stairs, past assorted nameless doors we found the queer space to be locked.

Now this wasn't such a surprise as it was about 6 on a Friday afternoon and no self respecting students should have been hanging around campus anyway. What did shock me however was that the door had one of those silver passcode locks where you key in the number to get in, which implies that to get in you have to know someone who knows the passcode and then get them to either take you there or let you in on the super secret code.

Admittedly I'm not particularly involved in the whole Usyd queer scene so maybe the passcode is known by all and I could walk up to anyone that I vaguely recognise from the queer revue and they would happily divulge it to me, but I felt that was really missing the point. The queer space is supposed to be somewhere on campus where people can feel safe regardless of their sexual preferences.

Even more outrageous than the lock was the list of rules that specified only queer identifying students are allowed to use the space! I'm sorry but I feel that a queer space should be somewhere where queer students can feel comfortable, not a place where straight people can't. A quick Google search of queer space brings up links to the queer spaces of our UNSW and Macquarie counterparts, both of which encourage queer-friendly straight people to come along. It seems to me that the queer space is paradoxically one of the least accessible places on campus for queer students, which is a real shame. Surely being queer should be about accepting anyone who accepts you; not about propagating exclusion.

## Yay! Autonomy! Also, Why?

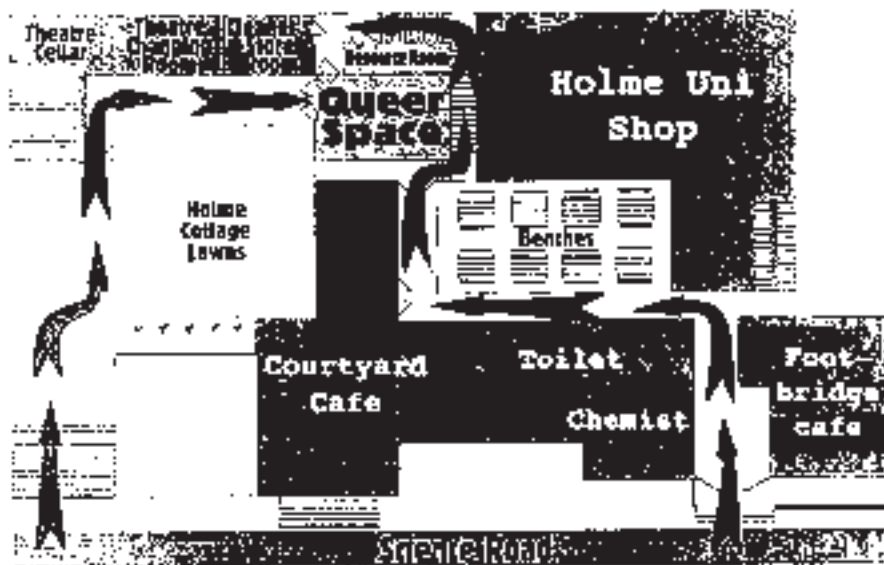
The USYD queerspace is queer autonomous. That is, we ask heterosexual identifying people to exempt themselves from the space. This is almost inevitably controversial, so here's a handy dandy explanation of what autonomy means and why it's important to queer spaces.

1. The queer space is not just for funsies. Queer spaces can be a really good social space. There's coffee! And a microwave! And a bookshelf! And queers! But ultimately, while these things make the space not-deadly-boring to be in, they aren't the main point of the space. Queer spaces are here to provide a safe space for queer students on campus. Queer students still face comments, catcalls and threats of violence on campus, and the

queer space provides a space for them to feel safe and comfortable, something that isn't always possible in the rest of the University. Even relatively benign things, like assumptions about queers' sexuality and gender identity, being spoken over or having to self censor can be really exhausting and stressful, and again, the space provides a place away from that. The queer space is also sometimes used by people who aren't out, or who are only comfortable being out to other queer people, and it's really important that that is respected.

2. Even the best super heterosexual buddy/heroes can mess up. We don't mean this in a bad way. No-one is perfect! But sometimes even the best of us say something offensive or unconsciously perpetuate oppression, and we have to recognise that that often comes from a place of privilege. So while most heterosexual people aren't out there egging all the queers or shouting out of cars, almost all of them will probs get a case of foot-in-mouth when it comes to queer people sometimes. And since the queer space is there as a safe space, and not just a hang-out-with-your-buddies space, heterosexual foot-in-mouthness can be really toxic to the space's core purpose.

3. We aren't the queer-enough police. The queer space is autonomous, but we don't go around checking people's membership card for the Grand High Order of Homosexualists and Gender Pirates. If you feel that you fall anywhere in the giant umbrella of "queer", you're welcome in the space, no questions asked. But if you don't, maybe consider whether it's worth ignoring the small request that queers get one boxy little dungeon (albeit with couches! and board games!) out of a suburb sized university campus.



If you have trouble accessing the queerspace please contact the queer convenors: queerconvenors@usu.usyd.edu.au or the queer officers: queer.officers@src.usyd.edu.au

## ELECTIONS 2010

### ELECTORAL OFFICER'S REPORT STUDENTS' REPRESENTATIVE COUNCIL

The University of Sydney

Phone: 02 9660 5222  
www.src.usyd.edu.au

*Following the completion of the count, I declare the following persons elected:*

**PRESIDENT:**  
Dee Walmsley

**HONI SOIT:**  
Boom

**NUS DELEGATES:**  
7 to be elected  
(in order of election)

Deb White  
Elly Howse  
Sharangan Maheswaren  
James Flynn  
Madison Cartwright  
Ross Leedham  
Joe Blackshield.

**STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE COUNCIL:**  
33 to be elected.  
(By Ticket Order on the Ballot Paper)

**A - Punch for Meco**  
Pierce Hartigan.

**B - Green Campus Now.**  
Rosa Nolan

**C - Spark! for SRC**  
Ewen Cameron

**D - Activate! Student Rights**  
Deb White  
Raihana Haidany

**M - Activate for Cumbo**  
Jacqueline Bui

**N - Left Focus**  
Luke Mason

**O - McDonalds on Campus**  
Aaron Duke

**U - Fresh**  
Avani Dias  
Alexandra Cowan

**V - Lead'em for President**  
Alistair Oakes

**AC - Activate International Students**  
Gillian Gan

**AG - U**  
Soo-jae Lee  
James McLean

**AI - Activate for Arts**  
Peter Hong

**AK - The Greens**  
Madison Cartwright

**AL - Activate!**  
Phoebe Drake  
Meghan Batcheldor  
Phil Boncardo

**AM - Boom for the Ladies**  
Julian Lernach

**AO - Boom for Beer**  
Rhys Pogonski

**AS - Lead'em for First Years**  
Tim Matthews

**AX - Free Parking**  
Alex Morrison

**BA - Liberals**  
Kurt Graham

**BC - Students First for Cumberland**  
Yu Gu

**BE - Punch for Arts**  
Alistair Stephenson

**BH - Flynn Independent**  
James Flynn  
David Flynn

**BI - Students First**  
Hiltin Xiaoting Gao  
Chad Sidler  
Morgan Qasabian  
Henry Kha  
Danny Datong Wang

*It was encouraging to note a 15% increase in the number of students voting over last years numbers.*

Paulene Graham  
Electoral Officer 2010  
1st October 2010





# Twenty10

Supporting young people wherever they are

Twenty10 Development Manager **David Moutou**, talks about their work with young people of diverse genders, sexes and sexualities.

An e-mail arrived at Twenty10 in the last few weeks from a young person named Dale\* (name has been changed) who had come out a few years ago, but due to the rocky response had 'gone back in' in order to not make it too difficult for their parents. A number of experiences in Dale's life had left them dealing with depression and anxiety, which had added to their difficulty to make friends. Now, as a 20 year old, Dale wanted to get out and meet people and look after their own needs more. They were keen to come to our Saturday group and maybe see our counsellor.

In that short e-mail was the expression of loss, hope and strength - a powerful mix that we see in the many different stories of young people who access Twenty10. Twenty10 offers support services, art programs and drop-in centre for young people of diverse genders, sexes and sexualities. Our experience over the last 28 years has taught us that coming out is not about becoming a new person, it is a process of getting to know yourself and, when it's safe to do so, inviting people to be part of your life. We have learnt that the many different experiences and reactions people have mean that there is never going to be one easy path by which they find their way to Twenty10. We learnt that we need to meet them wherever they are at - geographically and emotionally.

The world in which we work has changed a lot since we started as an outreach program in 1982. However, some things still remain the same. As Sydney gets more and more expensive, safe and secure housing continues to be a major issue, particularly for young people of diverse genders, sexes and sexualities. Our case-managers continue to support young people to find housing options that work or provide assistance for the employment, education and health problems that can result from housing stress. Twenty10 does have a limited amount of housing that it offers to young clients or we work with other housing providers to find opportunities. Time and again we witness the benefit that comes from having the time and space to focus on other things like study or repairing family relationships.

As Twenty10 embarks on the next five years of work, we have set a vision for ourselves to be a known place of excellence in leadership, education and services for young people wherever they are. This means that we will keep doing some things, like having our telephone support line; offering goal-orientated case-management; and providing a busy drop-in centre and engaging art programs. It also means we hope to expand some of our current

services, like increasing our counselling team to better meet clients' mental health needs or providing more training in regional communities and supporting those communities to create safer places and education campaigns.

To achieve this vision, we also need to start doing some new things, like offering more direct services to parents and families who may be struggling to understand the realities of gender and sexual diversity; or by providing mentoring as well as leadership and living skills training for young people; and investigating ways to deliver our accommodation service in new ways. We also want to foster the growth of virtual communities for young people to safely meet.

One of our first priorities is the expansion of our counselling services. Currently, 93% of the calls we receive from young people and families seeking counselling are unable to have their needs met because our counsellor is already over-capacity and our partner services have long waiting lists. A significant number of our clients have serious mental health needs, but only 50% of those young people are currently accessing some form of psychological support or counselling. These young people have been affected by negative coming out experiences or are having difficulties due to the experience of homophobia, transphobia or isolation. We want to be sure that we are meeting these young people where they are at and providing them with the services they need, or advocating strongly to ensure they find support elsewhere.

Twenty10 can't do this work alone. We look to the young people accessing Twenty10 to help us understand the direction we need to be taking. And we look to young people to provide some of the leadership that will make our communities safer and more welcoming places for all. So, we would love to invite you to come along to our drop-in centre in Newtown and get involved. Come to our monthly dinners on the first Wednesday of each month. Even more simply, you can help by demonstrating in your daily life that you have pride in your relationships and your life choices. Together we can ensure that people like Dale can find support when they need it most and not feel that going "back in" and being silent is their only choice.

**Twenty10 is located at 45 Bedford Street Newtown, just behind The Hub. For opening hours and program details, visit their website: [www.twenty10.org.au](http://www.twenty10.org.au) or call (02) 8594 9555.**

## Ask Abe

Q & A with students who need help and a dog who has all the answers...

Send your letters to:  
help@src.  
usyd.edu.au



Hi Abe,

Thank you for helping me with my problem. I am a female student in a faculty where there are mostly male students. I think most of them have figured out that I am a lesbian and do not respect me at all. I have a lot of trouble when I do group work and have no one to review study with. I tried to talk to my teachers about it but have found it really hard to make a connection with them as well. I feel alone, isolated and sad. Is there something I can do to make things better or this how it's going to be for the next 3 years.

*Alone*

Dear Alone,

Your situation sounds very challenging. I'm glad you've been able to stick with your studies. I think you can make things improve. Sometimes it is difficult to be able to talk to a lecturer or tutor about how you are feeling or how you are going in the course. Maybe see if there is a year co-ordinator that you can talk to instead who may be more removed from the classroom and therefore a little less intimidating. Maybe you could talk to someone in the counselling unit about developing some communication strategies to try with the other students. Maybe you should forget about the other students in your classes and work on building relationships on campus with other people who have a better understanding of you and your situation. For example, the women's collective would have other women in faculties that are male dominated. Lots of the world is pretty male dominated so I reckon you shouldn't have much trouble explaining how you feel. The queer collective also would be a great contact. Check out a couple of their meetings and see if that helps. Also remember that if you are being treated less well than other students because of your gender or your sexuality that is discrimination. SRC HELP would be able to help you make a complaint to the Equal Opportunity Unit if this is a problem for you. The most important thing for you to know here is that at the very least, the SRC is here to help you.

*Abe*

## Contact SRC HELP

02 9660 5222 / 0466 169 664 (satellite)

[www.src.usyd.edu.au](http://www.src.usyd.edu.au)

[help@src.usyd.edu.au](mailto:help@src.usyd.edu.au)



Level 1, Wentworth Building G01

# President's Report

Report of the SRC President, Elly Howse // president@src.usyd.edu.au

Hope you all had a nice week off from uni, though I know a lot of you were writing essays, studying for assessments, on placements and generally being busy. Yes it's that time of semester, so make sure you take care of yourself and your buddies! Otherwise Stuvac and two weeks of exam will seem UNBEARABLE. Don't worry though, you have almost finished the uni year and you will get a lovely 3-4 months off. Unless you are like me and are starting Honours. Sigh...

I thought I'd write my report in a slightly different style this week. I went to the Festival of Dangerous Ideas on the weekend and although I didn't get to see that dude speak about 'Stuff white people like', I reckon I can do an even better job with 'What queerz like' (the z is just for extra coolness, y'know).

## Stuff queerz like

### 1. Student organisations

Student organisations were some of the original places on campuses in Australia and abroad that actually provided a variety of students with support throughout their time at uni. Universities now run some of these support services (since Voluntary Student Unionism) but it's important to remember that this great work was started by student organisations. Welfare services, legal advice, even bail money if you went to a protest and got arrested! Student organisations and social events on campus were also a way in which queer students could meet each other in friendly, not hostile, environments.

### 2. Repealing VSU

The introduction of Voluntary Student Unionism (VSU) in 2006 has meant that a lot of these great services on many university campuses in Australia have closed down or are very limited in what they do. You may think organisations such as the SRC, USU and SUPRA seem pretty amazing already, but I'd encourage you to go visit other campuses where student organisations didn't get financial support from their universities. Where am I talking about? University

of New England, Southern Cross University, University of Western Sydney, even University of Newcastle... all these universities have suffered hugely because of VSU, and many of these universities can't afford to support their student organisations (or some evil ones just won't because they don't believe in them). This is why repealing VSU, not just introducing a Student Service Fee, is important (though I do conceded there should be changes to the original universal unionism legislation). We need to make sure all those campuses have supportive staff, inclusive spaces and a community to support all students, no matter their gender identity, trans\* status, sexuality etc.

Or think about it like this: if everyone were to pay tax voluntarily in society, how much would YOU have to spend on vital needs such as education and health? Not much. Who would pay tax voluntarily?? (Apart from a few nice selfless individuals). Universal student unionism is the idea that all students pay a nominal amount to put back in to the services that support them. If everyone pays a bit, it doesn't mean it's on the individual to fork out heaps to get help.

### 3. Better Youth Allowance support

The SRC has seen many students who would be classified under the 'unreasonable to live at home' conditions for Youth Allowance. Some of these students have been my friends, who couldn't live at home because their family didn't accept their sexuality, or their partners, or their changing gender identity. When I say 'couldn't live at home' I mean their family chucked them out on the street or threatened them with violence. It's a real problem and unfortunately if you're an adult, no one seems to want to help you much. Organisations like the SRC, SUPRA and other community organisations have stepped in to push for Centrelink change, more low-cost accommodation, more university bursaries and greater support for these students.

When I was asked what I was doing



next year, I said, "I'll be doing my Honours year and I guess I'll just live on Youth Allowance to focus on doing well." WRONG! I calculated that on the maximum Youth Allowance payment I would get each month, I have about \$30 left over each week. Take out bills and that's \$10 a week. I'm not kidding. So when we're agitating for a LIVEABLE Youth Allowance, that's what we mean. For students who can't work because their course load is huge and because of a whole lot of other reasons, we need to have a system that makes sure tertiary students are supported, especially those students who don't have a choice and have to live out of home, have no home or need financial assistance.

By the way, I'm already looking for a job. If you know of any, please contact me!

### 4. Safe spaces on campus

If you don't know where the Queer space is, you should totally head over there. It's a massively rad room in the Holme building and is a nice space to just go and chill out when everything is getting a bit much. There are often weekly discussion forums or friends just simply hang out. Try it sometime.

### 5. Trans\*-friendly uni staff

I should've written 'queer-friendly' uni staff but I'll be more specific. There are some issues that I've heard / witnessed in my time here at uni regarding trans\*phobic staff. I'd like to see our uni put more effort into training general and academic staff to be non-judgemental

and polite to all students, especially those who identify as trans\*. Nothing is harder than making the decision to transition to another gender identity and to have a staff member say, "Sorry, did you say you were FEMALE? FEMALE? But it says here you're MALE. I don't understand..." (very loudly in front of every single person in the Student Centre). Or my personal favourite, "What do you mean you're NOT EITHER???"

Gah.

### 6. Queer office-bearers who have lots of great inclusive events

Look this speaks for itself. Queer students like nice queer officers in the USU, SRC and SUPRA. I'd like to say a special thanks to Ren, Damo, Curtis and Ella for their amazing work this year. Snaps also to the first-ever USU Queer Revue which was INCREDIBLE. Sorry everyone else but it was the best revue! You've made a great queer community at the university and I'm sure others will build on it in years to come. Speaking of which, come to the Queer Honi launch party on 11<sup>th</sup> October and Retrosexual on 14<sup>th</sup> October to celebrate all that is fabulous in the queer community at Usyd!

## Get involved!

Come along to a collective..

- Women's Collective: 1pm Thursdays, Holme Women's Room.  
 Queer Collective: 2pm Mondays, Queer Space Holme Buildin  
Environment Collectives:  
 Student Enviro Action Collective (SEAC): 1pm Mondays, Botany Lawns  
 Climate Action Collective: 1pm Mondays, Chancellors Lawns

## Queer Honi Launch

Come join us to celebrate the launch of  
 Queer Honi 2010.@ Hermans Bar.  
 Monday 11th October 6pm.



# General Secretary's Report

Report of the General Secretary, Donherra Walmsley // [gen.sec@src.usyd.edu.au](mailto:gen.sec@src.usyd.edu.au)

Given that this is the annual queer edition of Honi Soit, I thought that maybe I should talk about the role of student organisations in queer activism.

The National Union of Students has been very active over the last few years in the campaign for marriage equality, which has been successful in putting this piece of legislative discrimination in the spotlight, and hopefully with the make-up of the new parliament where the Greens hold the balance of power in the Senate (once the new Senate starts sitting in July) we'll see this last piece of formal discrimination removed. It's also worth noting that the NSW parliament recently voted to allow same-sex couples to adopt, thereby removing the last piece

of legislative discrimination in our state.

The role of student organisations is not, however, limited to lobbying to try and effect change on a national and state level. An equally (or perhaps more) important role that student organisations play for queer students is to give them a community, a place to meet other queer students, and to feel supported in their identity. This is one of the reasons why the queer edition of Honi Soit is so essential – it provides that opportunity for queer students to express themselves and demonstrates the wide range of people and identities who make up our wonderful community.

Despite the fact that we are well on the way to removing all official

discrimination against queer people in Australia, the fact remains that queer youth are 7 times more likely to commit suicide than their heterosexual counterparts. The fight for marriage equality has taken centre stage in recent years, but we need to remember that the fight doesn't stop there. As student organisations, it's absolutely vital that we work to address the mental health issues which face queer youth, and providing safe spaces on campus is one way we can do that. The SRC also supports queer students through our casework and advocacy service, and remember that if you ever feel that you're being discriminated against in a class because of your sexuality or gender identity (or race or for any other reason!) you



can come to the SRC and we'll help you out. There are also a wide range of community groups who can help you out, such as Twenty10, ACON, and many more which are listed somewhere in this publication.

I hope that you read and enjoy this publication!

# Queer Report

Report of the SRC Queer Officers, Ren Arcamone and Damien Costello // [queer.officers@src.usyd.edu.au](mailto:queer.officers@src.usyd.edu.au)

Hi everyone. We are Ren and Damo your two Queer Officers with the SRC. Our job is to facilitate the queer collective to do all the fun stuff it wants to do. The queer collective meets weekly to discuss various issues that affect queer students and how to fix them. We also plan and organise events on campus, some are autonomous (queers only) and some are non-autonomous. We do this so that everyone can attend and feel comfortable around like-minded people.

Our year started in January when we got the ball rolling for the Cross Campus Mardi Gras float. This float allows queer students all over the country to come to Sydney and join in the festivities of Mardi Gras and march down Oxford

St. Organising this float was a lot of work, but was well worth it as everyone had a wonderful time. We would like to thank for all the student groups that contributed to this event - especially, the USYD SRC, USYD Union, SUPRA and ARC at UNSW.

Earlier this year we had Pride Festival, a two week celebration of all things queer, which ended in the annual Semester 1 Queer Party. Pride Festival was organised as a collaborative effort between us, the Union's queer convenors, Shades and SUQRS. Pride Festival is a collection of talks, seminars, debates and workshops all to do with queer stuff. Pride Festival also puts on a variety of social events for queer student's and their friends.

Everyone who attended had a really swell time.

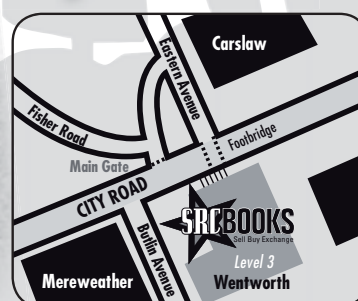
At the end of last semester we were responsible for organising a group of USYD students to attend Queer Collaborations. QC is an annual conference where queer students from all over the country come together to network, go to workshops on activism and find out what's been happening on other campuses. It goes for a week and this year it was hosted by the wonderful people of the University of Wollongong. Next year it will be held in Perth.

The queer officers are also responsible for editing the annual Queer Autonomous edition of the fine

publication you are now reading. This edition was made with queer only submissions and edited by queers.

So what events do we put on each week you ask? Well we have collective meetings on Mondays at 1pm and board games night at 6pm both in the queerspace (autonomous). We also meet up for a weekly drink session in Manning Bar on Thursdays (non-autonomous so bring your friends). If you would like to know more send us an email, or pop down to collective one day. Also come along to the Queer Honi launch party at Monday Oct. 11 at 6pm at Hermann's or the Annual Semester 2 Queer Party "Retrosexual" on Thursday Oct. 14 at 7pm at Hermann's, bring your friends.

**CHEAPEST BOOKS**  
ON SYDNEY UNI CAMPUS



- We buy & sell textbooks according to demand
- You can sell your books on consignment
- We are open to USYD students & the public

**Search for text books online**  
[www.src.usyd.edu.au/default.php](http://www.src.usyd.edu.au/default.php)  
Call 02 9660 4756 to check availability and reserve a book.

**Location: Level 3, Wentworth Building**  
(Opposite Donut King & NAB)  
**Hours:** Mondays to Fridays 9am - 4.30pm  
O-Week & 1st week of semester, M-F, 9am - 4.45pm  
**Phone:** (02) 9660 4756  
**Email:** [books@SRC.usyd.edu.au](mailto:books@SRC.usyd.edu.au)

Current second-hand text books!  
[www.src.usyd.edu.au](http://www.src.usyd.edu.au)





### Peanut Butter

anonymous

I see myself sleepwalking. I see glimpses of my bare flesh as I move through the lamplight into the kitchen. Morning is also sleeping and the air is aloof. Goosebumps rise from the surface of my skin, as though a thousand green feathers are falling over me. I am comfortable in my discomfort.

My feet and the tiles make music together and so I place my ear to the ground and listen. My ear becomes a mouth and swallows the vibrations. The vibrations move through me and I cannot keep still. My body melts into the floor and I roll – a tickle as my nipples touch the tiles, cat hair sticking to my clammy skin. I take the life of the floor inside me.

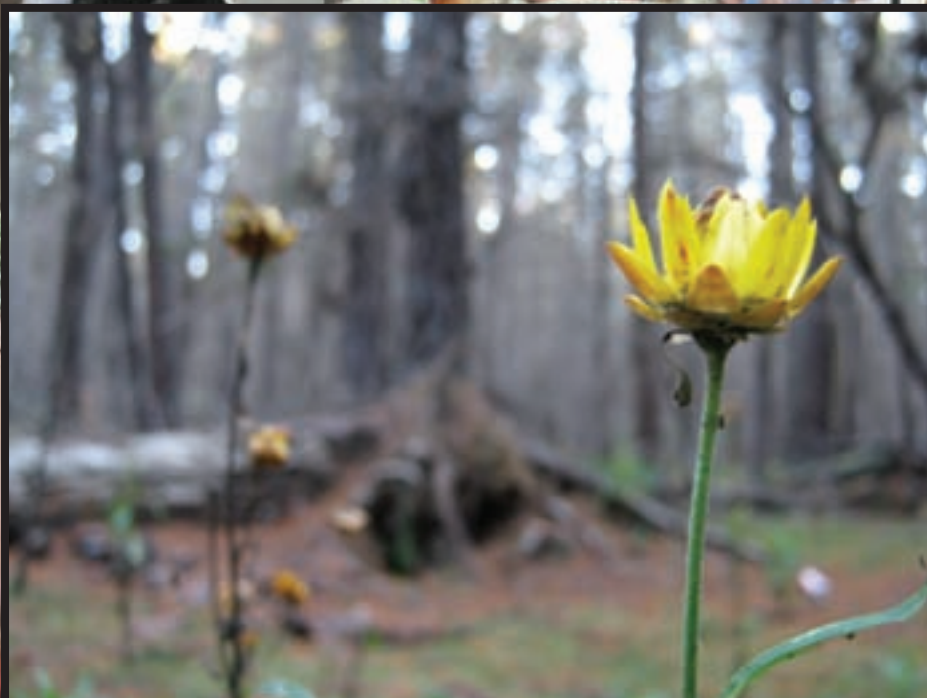
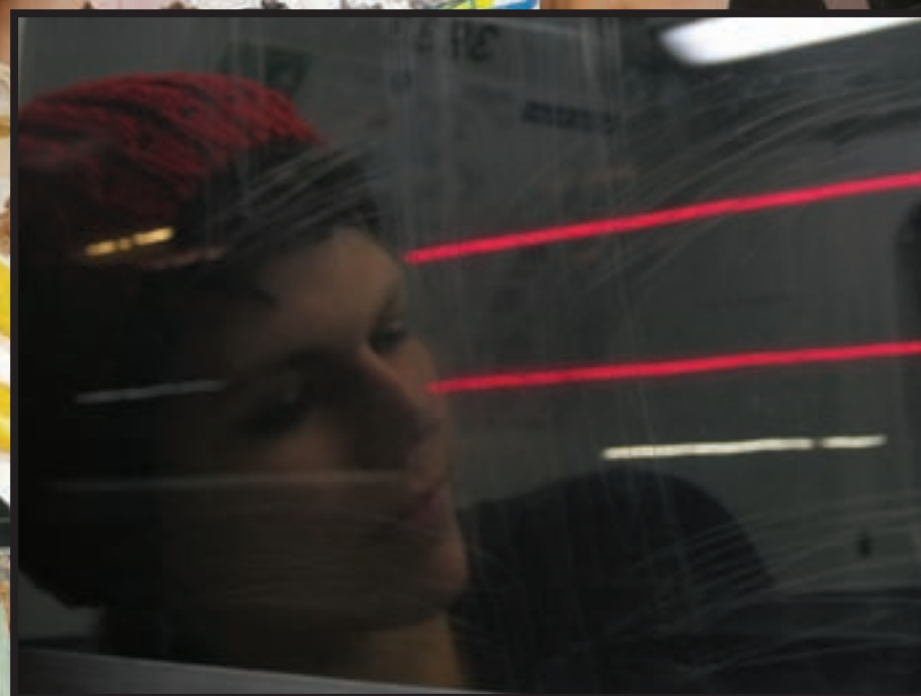
I roll up to the pantry. Not knowing what comes next I explore – sand, rain, paint, peanut butter. The smooth kind not the crunchy kind. The perfect kind for wearing.

I dip my fingers deep into the jar, scoop out a handful and paint the balm onto my body. First my arms, then my neck

and my chest and my breasts. I massage myself. Warm peanut butter into my gaping belly button, over my thighs and into my cunt. I become like honey – mellifluous and oozing all over the floor. I cannot be contained. I have been atomised, painted into smithereens and I echo. My body lingers.

Feathers are falling again, but this time they are blue. A single candle lights a bathtub that breathes dancers made of steam above me. My blanket dissolves into the water and I swim through the scent of roasted peanuts and melting wax. All I hear is the bath breathing.

Back in the bedroom, where the furniture always shifts and stories made of cigarettes are burnt into the carpet, red fills my eyes. The sun is creeping out from the mackerel sky and so I lie on the bed and fall asleep twirling my underarm hair.



Photos by Harriet Harding





# I'm a Monster, Can't You See?

'Don't get too close to me, I am a monster. I will try to bring you down because I can't control myself.' Kevin Blechdom, 'Monster'

There's looking like a monster and then there's behaving like a monster. Looking like a monster sometimes means being treated in monstrous ways. We can reclaim monster identities but how do we deal with the monsters that try to bring us down?

I caught a train to a beach in Queens one day. As I waited in a Brooklyn subway station people began to stare. I used to look away: I'm not here, this isn't happening. But part of my travel plan was getting fierce, so I started staring back. I know the exact facial expression that says 'I am trying to work out your gender.' Am I the first seemingly female-bodied person with a beard that they have ever seen? Surely not in New York City – homo, sweet homo for fabulous freaks. Still they stare, I stare back, they look away, I catch them again, they look away. I get hostile: stop trying to assassinate me with your eyes.

I come from a long line of famous folks you might call monsters. Let me tell you about some of my favourite ladies.

Annie Jones was exhibited in the circus from the age of nine months.

When she was still very young she was kidnapped by a phrenologist but was returned to her parents after some time. She married twice during her life and died young from TB. She is perhaps the world's most renowned bearded lady. My favourite photograph shows her draped across a couch, one hand on her hip, confident and sexy as hell.

Jennifer Miller is a radical circus performer, writer and professor. I first saw her in a book of photographs called *Women*. In her portrait she is reclining nude on an antique chair; her hair is long, dark and glossy, and so is her beard. The angle of her legs and a coyly placed hand obscure her genitals. When I discovered this picture I was still a kid, not really understanding I was about to be told to pick sides on the gender team. Jennifer Miller was a question and an answer – I was transfixed.

Vivian Wheeler has the longest female beard in the world. She was recently reunited with her thirty-year old son. His father took him from her shortly after she gave birth, and later abandoned him in a motel. Her son was adopted, and grew up not knowing who his biological mother was. They found each other and he learned that she worked in sideshows from an early age. She used to shave in between stints in the circus, but now she is proud to be a bearded lady.

Bastian Fox Phelan

The day before I took the trip to Queens I read this quote:

'Because most people have great difficulty recognising the humanity of another person if they cannot recognise that person's gender, the gender-changing person can evoke in others a primordial fear of monstrosity, or loss of humanness. That gut-level fear can manifest itself as hatred, outrage, panic, or disgust, which may then translate into physical or emotional violence directed at the person who is perceived as not-quite-human.'

Susan Stryker, *Transgender History*

The more comfortable I feel breaking gender binaries, the more the boundaries break down between myself and strangers on the street. When your gender is unintelligible to others you do not become ineligible for basic social etiquette. But the way some monsters look at me tells me otherwise.

A student at a university in the United States attacked a transgender student in a bathroom. He pushed him into a stall and carved 'IT' into his chest. There's looking like a 'monster' and then there's brutal transphobic violence. Control yourself.



## The Gesture

A bracing wind poured from the narrow streets into the empty square. I was drawn to the imposing marble facade of the church seeking protection from the wind, but fell under the cool shadow it had carved into the cobblestone street. As the cold chipped at my short jacket sleeves Dante regarded me with a severe expression, casting his judgemental gaze along the width of the square. The poet's cape was swept around him as he stuck a dramatic pose, the ripples frozen in time by the immortal stone.

I looked around the square. Still no one. I glanced at my watch on two consecutive minutes, rehearsing my nervousness for the rendezvous. The place had been determined by my anonymous friend, the fame of the church doing nothing to negate my anxiety of the unfamiliar surroundings. But now that I'd come it seemed less strange than it might, the testing glances of the men alluded to inconspicuous desire, realised by my imagination only because of who I was about to meet.

I walked aimlessly to keep warm. As I passed a dark older man my breath shortened. He narrowed his eyes as if in scrutiny or perhaps he was just shutting the cold out with his furrowed brow. My thought passed from these strangers to mine: I recalled the one photo he had sent and attempted to reconcile his features to theirs, afraid that a moment's inattention might induce some miraculous metamorphosis, incarnating him half an hour early in the form of one of these men strolling. His features were included as a courtesy: the unremarkable short hair, thick eyebrows and Roman nose did little to distract from his chiselled physique. A white shirt clung tellingly to pronounced pecs and abs, he relaxed improbably into an understated smile.

My path branched out from the square to the sidestreets around. My suspicions of the area were confirmed: a suggestive name above a concealed door; a pale rainbow flag faded more by time than harsh light, exposed only to shadow at the margin of the city; and everywhere intimate clusters of men, all hushed until you passed before taking up the thread

Paul Karp

of conversation more urgently than before. The whole course of the evening was obvious now, marked by these cloistered bars huddling in the corners of my map, squeezed into alleys and lanes out of sight of other citizens, who must surely believe that these patrons may be in the cold now, but their souls would soon be scorching on the fires of conscience which prevented the great poet from throwing himself down despite his great desire.

Conscious of the cowardly eyes obscured under the awnings of the lane, I strode back to the centre of the square. The dying light of the winter sun again revealed the hollowness of the piazza. I sat now, quiet and uncomprehending on a block of marble before the church, a foreboding cold spreading through me. A brief burst of sound came from my phone, 'running 15 mins late. Cya soon, cutie' it read.

I looked up from the glow of the screen and saw two figures across the square coming towards me. At first indistinct, the directness of their path drew them sharply before my eyes: two young men, identically dressed, skinny jeans clinging to skinnier thighs, ragged scarves draped across a shoulder; stubble on one, thickset glasses on the other. My eyes bounced between the two, their fashion a language finally comprehensible to me. Despite tracking them intently for the first fifty metres of the way across the square, I was compelled by my vanity to look away as they passed. They smiled, catching my pretence and strode past erect and confident. Without a backward glance, one casually nestled his hand into the back pocket of his mate, clasping his left cheek. I felt somewhat patronised, and I wanted to call out and correct them but couldn't risk being misunderstood twice. They seemed to have already said everything they wanted to with the inexplicable transgression of the gesture. I imagined the photo of my soon to be companion but didn't think he'd understand or care to hear, so I folded the bars into the creases of my map, chose a path in a similar but divergent direction from the only slightly courageous couple and left.

## Astrosexual

I am different, not because I'm that way.  
I can have anal sex.  
I can have vaginal sex.  
Oral sex. Foot sex. Finger sex. Ear sex.  
Emotional sex.  
Sex without company. Sex without touching.  
Sex without consciousness, one of my favourite.

And I don't consider virginity.  
Because I don't believe in a doorway to sex.  
I know that there are

## Murder, c. 2018

Tony

Puncture  
scrape  
squeeze  
the choirs of his heart and  
pay those blood-notes to your God –  
He who hates fags.

He'll swallow the  
splattered  
dissonance  
in one de(vi)lightful slurp.

Pity.

He won't even save you the best part.

HIGH-FLYING FURY: MIPs KEEP TRAVEL PERKS – PAGE 5

The Herald Sun's cover story on Home And Away's lesbian kiss was just part of the negative media reaction to it.



## Out Loud

Bron Watkins

We realised that text messages are often misinterpreted due to a lack of meaningful context. Particularly among people who are prone to an abnormal degree of over-analysis. However, we also realised that it is much easier to text certain things than to say them. And so, in our eternal genius, we began to send each other subtext messages. The rules: texts are to be sent only in each other's presence, and only if accompanied by context-revealing facial expressions. No ironic bullshit. After all, what does an ironic face look like? I think we actually had this discussion, but of course, conversations about faces in this day and age teeter so precariously on the edge of that insufferable meme progression. And we really wanted to avoid bringing your mother into the discussion, even as a joke, seeing as she is so soberingly homophobic.

I remember that the texting started off as a beautiful thing. We were sitting on the sand at that beach near my place, the waves so grunge I could barely hear you. And, instead of shouting, you texted me,

Your collarbone is totally sexy. Put your arms around me.

You were so soft, and the sky was so incredible at that moment I couldn't speak. I remember there'd been a storm the day before. Bits of driftwood and a destroyed beanbag lay limp and exhausted in the shallows, styrofoam beads strewn Pollockesque along the shore. I started telling you about the pacific trash vortex and about how plastic never completely breaks down. You said, how terrible. You texted,

Then we should make our weddings rings out of plastic.

I also remember it being fucked. You were standing in my room. No, sitting on the bed, ignoring me, ignoring my amazing stupid jokes, looking at your phone. Calling your mum to tell her you were at a friend's place.

I said, 'I'm not closing these blinds to be sleazy. It's just a nicer light with them closed.'

'Yeah, oh... oh I didn't even think of that, haha.'

When will you tell your family?

I don't know.

If it's so awkward, you could text it to them

Can't you ever be serious

I am. Just do something. I can't stand it being so secret

My eyes fierce. Yours furious but fightless, frustrated, leaking.

You're not worth it.

I don't know what I was expecting. We never had one real fight. With real words, with real yelling. So maybe I thought that it wouldn't really end. But the worst part is I can't remember if I ever told you that I loved you out loud. So here it is.

I loved you out loud.

## Punk'nhead

windows and trapdoors,  
and peep-holes and missing walls,  
passage ways, mail boxes, phone lines  
and e-mail and telepathic messages  
to put yourself inside.

And I am all in my head.  
So I can have sex  
in a hole  
in my flesh; in a dream.  
(in the wet eye of my thought)  
in my heart's alignment  
with his hand in a wave.

I am not bisexual,  
I am astrosexual.

## Rainbow Marble Cake!

Ingredients:

170g butter  
170g castor sugar  
3 eggs  
1 tsp vanilla essence  
170g self-raising flour  
4 tsp baking powder  
3 tbsp milk  
Food colouring (Red, Orange, Yellow,  
Green, Blue, Purple)

Preheat oven to 180 degrees.

Making the Mixture:

Beat butter and sugar until creamy.

Fold eggs into mix, one at a time.

Gradually add sifted flour & powder into  
the mix while stirring.

Angelus Morningstar

Add milk and vanilla into mix and beat  
until smooth.

Divide mixture into a number of por-  
tions equal to food colours, and add a  
few drops of food colouring in to each.  
Stir until the colour is consistent for  
each portion.

Layering the Cake:

Spoon a layer of coloured mixture into  
a greased cake tin. When complete  
spoon a layer of the next colouring, and  
repeat with each layer of coloured mix.

Try to spoon coloured mix evenly.

Bake in preheated oven for 45-50 mins.



# QUEER HONI LAUNCH

Come join us to celebrate  
the launch of Queer Honi  
2010 at Hermans bar,  
Monday the 11th at 6pm

Hey Billy, what a rad  
beach party you are  
throwing. I sure hope  
no monsters show up  
to ruin it.

Food and  
drinks  
provided

# MONSTER MASH