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NUNS, HOT BOYS, HOT GIRLS AND LOTS OF CAKES IN THIS WEEK'S SCENE SNAPS

# Equality call

A NATIONAL INVESTIGATION INTO DISCRIMINATION AGAINST SAME-SEX COUPLES ATTRACTS A LARGE AMOUNT OF INTEREST, MYLES WEARING REPORTS.

More than 260 submissions have been received by the inquiry into financial discrimination experienced by same-sex couples being conducted by the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission.

Among the high-profile organisations to make recommendations are the Australian Council of Trade Unions, The Judicial Conference of Australia and The Association of Superannuation Funds of Australia.

Human rights commissioner Graeme Innes said he was very pleased with the number and range of submissions and was quietly confident the federal government would act on HREOC's recommendations.

"In recent weeks the government has made it very clear it wants to address issues of discrimination affecting people living in same-sex relationships. We want to facilitate that process," Innes told *Sydney Star Observer*.

Only a handful of submissions were anti-gay, Innes said.

The Judicial Conference of Australia (JCA), representing Australia's judges, said in its submission it wanted to see federal judges in same-sex relationships afforded the same pension entitlements and retirement benefits as judges in heterosexual relationships.

At present only heterosexual

partners of deceased federal judges receive a federal judicial pension. Most states, including NSW, do recognise the pension rights of gay judges.

"The JCA considers that Australian judicial officers, like other working Australians, should be able to share the fruits of their labours with their partners of either sex," the submission said.

The Association of Superannuation Funds of Australia (ASEA) highlighted areas where same-sex couples were treated unfairly in superannuation law.

ASEA recommended letting same-sex couples split their superannuation contributions; making them eligible to receive a spouse tax rebate if contributing to a partner's super; and permitting commonwealth employees to nominate their partner for superannuation death benefits - all things heterosexual couples could do.

Monash University's Castan Centre for Human Rights Law submitted a 24-page document highlighting other areas of discrimination for commonwealth employees, such as the fact they are not entitled to worker's compensation if their same-sex partner dies in a workplace accident.

The submission by the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) said under current workplace legislation, carer's leave could only be

accessed by same-sex couples residing together and should be extended to include couples who did not live together or had broken up.

The ACTU also suggested parental leave should include same-sex couples.

The majority of submissions were from individuals who shared real life stories, many of which related to Medicare and superannuation.

One woman wrote to complain that same-sex couples weren't recognised under Medicare, meaning that heterosexual couples were given higher rebates. A man who had been in a same-sex relationship for 30 years and had three children was angry he had to pay more for Medicare and private health cover than families with heterosexual parents.

A number of public servants complained they were unable to nominate their partner as the beneficiary on superannuation forms.

A gay man in a 10-year relationship who was caring for his invalid partner said he did not receive the same entitlements heterosexual couples would.

The next step in HREOC's inquiry will be to hold national consultations beginning late July. A final report should be ready for federal attorney-general Phillip Ruddock early next year, Innes said.

## Priscilla frocks up



An icon of gay cinema rolled up to Star City casino on Tuesday for the cast announcement for new musical *Priscilla, Queen Of The Desert*. A replica of Priscilla, the bus from the 1994 screen classic, delivered the show's three main stars Daniel Scott, Tony Sheldon and Jeremy Stanford (pictured front). Fellow cast members and real-life Sydney showgirls Damien Ross and Trevor Ashley (pictured back left and right) frocked up for the occasion, as did drag debutant Nick Hardcastle (pictured back centre).

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## bgf bake-off midnight shift club



Love the cake! Just love the cake, cake, cake and more cake. I am talking about last Sunday's annual BGF Bake-Off at the Midnight Shift. Like every other year, the downstairs of the Midnight Shift was packed to the rafters, with punters either enjoying one of the many shows that went on over the whole day or just having a bevvie or two and eyeing off one of the fabulous cakes.

The always-fabulous Mitzi Macintosh, who has become a sort of regular on the Bake-Off stage, hosted the day. With her auctioneer voice and technique practised within an inch of its life, she raised the crowd to a frenzy and also the prices into the thousands.

Her partner in crime was the pink-headed Cleopatra Coupé, who started the day off at a dull roar and by the end, after numerous complimentary homemade vodka shots, could be heard down the road. Who would have thought that Cleo could actually get any louder than she already is?

The way the Bake-Off works is anyone can enter a cake, jam, tart, pie, non-edible cake or biscuit. These are judged in their chosen categories by the celebrity judges, led by the culinary legend herself, Claire de Lune. Usually the top honour of Best Cake goes out to someone who really knows how to mix her butter and sugar, Miss 3-0. Taking out this prize over many years, 3-0 is just in it to help raise money at the auction, though we all have to admit her creations have to be seen to be believed. Truly amazing!

Once all the entrants have been judged, they are put under the auctioneer's hammer (Mitzi's huge rubber mallet).

This is where the craziness starts. Items start at reasonable prices that the average Joe Blows could afford. At \$50, \$60 here and there, they're still quite steep but for a charity not too bad - you can spend that on booze on just one night out. But as the bigger and more fabulous cakes start to be rolled out, in come the high rollers. Cakes going for thousands of dollars soon make the crowd scream with delight: club owner Tim Berry shelling out big bucks for a gorgeous creation dripping in Midnight Shift logos; a Chanel handbag going out for \$1,500 (yes, they had a Chanel handbag); and even Stonewall's Candy Boxx buying a huge lipstick cake being ridden by a pink showgirl for over \$1,000 (all edible, mind you ... well, okay, I licked the end of it when it was in the fridge on Monday night. Oops!)

As you can guess, the day was a huge success, with many slicing up his or her very expensive sweets for everyone to share. Nothing tastes better than a cake that has just cost over \$3,000, does it? Give me that any day. Just one more lap on the treadmill, though.

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