

# Editorial

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This special ‘Queer Queensland’ issue of *Queensland Review* is timely. On 21 June 2007, the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission’s Report on the effects of federal laws on same-sex couples and their children was tabled in Parliament. Entitled *Same-Sex: Same Entitlements*, the report was the outcome of a year-long inquiry which found that 58 federal laws discriminate against same-sex couples and their children by denying them financial and work-related entitlements available to opposite-sex couples and their children. To date, Parliament has not acted upon the report’s recommendation that the discriminatory legal definitions in those 58 laws be changed. However, one federal politician has campaigned tenaciously, vocally and persuasively for an end to such discrimination. Perhaps surprisingly to those unfamiliar with the paradoxes of Queensland, that man is a heterosexual member of the Liberal Party from Far North Queensland — Warren Entsch MP, the Federal Member for Leichhardt.

Warren Entsch’s appeal to the liberal values of individual rights has not galvanised a majority in his own party to end blatant discrimination, and Labor is also dragging its heels. Indeed, Labor leader Kevin Rudd — another Queenslander — is firmly opposed to civil unions, despite their easy acceptance in many of the European social democracies he admires. There are no net votes in championing the removal of discrimination against same-sex couples, and Warren Entsch has won wide respect in the queer community and beyond for taking up this cause for no personal benefit, but simply because he believes in a fair go for all. *Queensland Review* is honoured to open this issue with a commentary by Warren Entsch as he retires from Parliament.

‘Queer’, however, is not simply a synonym for ‘gay and lesbian’, and legal discrimination does not begin and end with same-sex couples. Nor did the editors choose the title ‘Queer Queensland’ for this issue merely because of its (admittedly irresistible) alliteration. As David Halperin argues, ‘queer is by definition whatever is at odds with the normal, the legitimate, the dominant’.<sup>1</sup> Our call for papers for this issue invited scholars to submit work on any aspect of the historical development or present actuality of queer identities in Queensland, including — but not limited to — gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex identities.

This issue begins with three historical papers. ‘Queensland’s Criminal Justice System and Homosexuality, 1860–1954’, by Clive Moore and Bryan Jamison, reports the findings of the analysis of 464 prosecutions of male homosexual activity in the colony and state of Queensland. Large-scale evidence of the treatment of homosexuality by the criminal justice system is rare, and this 95-year span of cases is unique in Australia. Moore and Jamison find that, during the twentieth century, the legal system attempted to understand homosexuality and moderated sentences accordingly, and argue that these findings help locate the timing of the emergence

of the modern Australian male homosexual. Yorick Smaal's paper also uses evidence from criminal justice records to explore the emergence of a distinct homosexual subculture in Queensland. In 'Coding Desire: The Emergence of a Homosexual Subculture in Queensland, 1890–1914', Smaal demonstrates that the germination of Queensland's homosexual subculture began in the late nineteenth century, assisted in part by the fluidity between urban and rural spheres in a highly decentralised state with an economy based largely on agriculture. Belinda McKay's paper, too, argues that modern sexual identities emerge not only from metropolitan cultures, but also from lifestyles developed in response to the conditions of life in remote regions of the nation and empire. In "'And They Sleep Together Like Husband and Wife": A Queer Queensland Genealogy', she uses a family case study to explore manifestations of same-sex attraction in early twentieth-century Cooktown and the influence of these sexual role models on three subsequent generations.

Three brief pieces on early gay rights activism continue the historical focus of these three papers, but also foreshadow the contemporary manifestations of queerness dealt with in the remainder of this issue. These pieces, and the accompanying photographs, appeared in the *Taking to the Streets: Two Decades That Changed Brisbane 1965–1985* exhibition, which ran at the Museum of Brisbane from 7 April to 10 September 2006. Jude Abbs' recounting of Cynthia McBride's story of the origin of CAMP (Campaign Against Moral Persecution) is followed by Clive Moore's tribute to gay rights reform activist Greg Weir and Niels van Amsterdam's recollections of the Radio 4ZZZ program, *Gaywaves*.

The gay rights and law reform movements which were active from the mid-1960s to the late 1980s were crucial contributors to the modernisation and diversification of Queensland. Shirleene Robinson's article, 'Queensland's Queer Press', points out that a queer press emerged relatively late in Queensland: the first official gay and lesbian newspaper, *Queensland Pride*, did not begin publication until 1991, just a few months after the decriminalisation of male homosexuality in Queensland. While she argues that the queer print media since then have struggled to represent the diversity of the state's gay, lesbian, bisexual, transsexual, intersex and queer (GLBTIQ) community, Robinson nonetheless accepts that these media play a role that cannot be subsumed by heterosexual-focused publications: they provide visibility, information and a sense of community and culture for queer Queenslanders. In 'We're Here All Week: Public Formation and the Brisbane Queer Film Festival', Kelly McWilliam looks at another significant public manifestation of contemporary queer culture: the Brisbane Queer Film Festival, which has been held annually at the Brisbane Powerhouse since 2000. McWilliam argues that the Brisbane Queer Film Festival (BQFF) is an important site for the articulation and enactment of queerness in Brisbane and Queensland, not only for one week every year, but also and more especially through its explicit contribution to the accumulation of queer traces at the Brisbane Powerhouse. Sheona Thomson's paper, 'It's Moments Like These You Need "Mint": A Mapping of Spatialised Sexuality in Brisbane', also explores how articulations of queerness within the built environment impact on the usage of those spaces. After considering ways in which lesbian space is mediated through interpersonal networks, queer media and (increasingly) virtual

spaces, Thomson maps how lesbians find each other *through* and *in* the spaces of Brisbane's built environment, before concluding with a case study of the Mint cocktail bar.

Cameos by Clive Moore and Yorick Smaal of three queer celebrities further underline the vibrancy and public visibility of queerness in contemporary Queensland. In 1962, drag queen Dame Sybil von Thorndyke was one of the founders of the Queen's Birthday Ball, which has become the longest continuously running annual gay celebration in the world. Gina Mather, who is president of the Australian Transgender Support Association, has campaigned for many years for recognition of Gender Identity Disorder and the removal of legal discrimination against transgenders. Drag queen Tamara Tonite was for many years the presenter of the eponymous television show on Community Television Briz31. In 2000, she stood as a candidate for the position of Lord Mayor of Brisbane, and in the 2001 state election she ran for the high-profile seat of Brisbane Central, which was held by the then premier, Peter Beattie.

“‘Who's the Man and Who's the Woman?’ Same-Sex Couples in Queensland ‘Doing’ Gender and Domestic Labour’, the final article in this issue, reports the findings of an exploratory study by Sue Kentlyn of domestic labour in same-sex households. Kentlyn's findings indicate that gay and lesbian couples do not take on heteronormative gender roles when doing domestic labour, and that in the negotiation and practice of domestic labour, the gay men and lesbians who participated in the study performed different kinds of gender, rather than a single form of gay masculinity or lesbian femininity.

This special issue of *Queensland Review* offers a sample of current scholarship on the state's queer past and present from a range of disciplinary contexts and theoretical perspectives. However, as Kelly McWilliam suggests in the phrase ‘We're Here All Week’, queer is a constant presence in Queensland, and *Queensland Review* welcomes further submissions on this under-researched topic for its regular issues.

## Note

- 1 David M. Halperin, *Saint Foucault: Towards a Gay Hagiography* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 62.