

'SIT DOWN GIRLIE'

Knickerless Girlie snaps heel and goes gay



'All you need is love...' [and law]

There have been some very gay scenes in California during July 2008 as same-sex couples took advantage of a Supreme Court decision and the subsequent granting of marriage certificates. Crusaders Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon, who have been partners for 15 years, were granted the first of the licences in acknowledgment of their unique role in the Court's decision. They had turned up at the Beverly Hills courthouse every St Valentine's Day for eight years and were repeatedly refused a marriage licence. On the day of their marriage they were quoted in the media as saying, 'We just love each other'.

'Some people get married...'

Meanwhile in Victoria, Australia the fight continues. Dewi Cooke (*The Age*, 2 August 2008) reports on 'a study in social (and legal) contrasts'. Hundreds of men and women had gathered at St Patrick's Cathedral to receive the blessing of the Archbishop of Melbourne, Denis Hart, for their decades-long marriages. Outside in the Melbourne winter streets a different congregation gathered — hundreds of same-sex couples were protesting on the fourth anniversary of the Howard Government's amendments to *The Marriage Act* which declared marriage to be a 'union between a man and a woman'. The protestors were supported by Victoria's Education Minister Bronwyn Pike who said Australian society would be diminished as long as laws discriminated against people because of their sexuality. Minister Pike declared, 'I support same-sex marriage, I have for many, many years. I believe that a civilised society is a society that is inclusive and is a society that affords the same human rights, the same access to justice, the same equality under the law for every one of its citizens.'

Lagging laws

The number of *de facto* relationships in Australia is continuing to increase but our laws concerning assets in these relationships have not kept up and could do with a quick fix, according to special counsel Wendy Sylva of law firm Hall & Wilcox. The Australian Bureau of Stats' data published in *The Age* (29 July 2008) indicate about 15 per cent of the population are living in *de facto* or same-sex relationships. In Victoria the *Relationships Act 2008* No 12 comes into operation on 1 December 2008. Sylva nonetheless advises women, especially those with children, that despite some reforms they will still get a better deal if they are married. The issues are complicated by the federal/state sharing of power, with state governments being responsible for disputes between *de facto* couples concerning property matters while superannuation and custody issues are matters for the Family Court. Reforms to the *Family Law Act* are due to be debated in about September this year. (See Julianne Dowling, 'De factos on the rise, but laws falling behind' (*The Age Business*, 29 July 2008).

Stolen babies

And while the first photos of Angelina Jolie and Brad Pitt's twins have been sold for \$A15 million — the most expensive baby photos in history — women in some countries are being tricked into selling their unborn children into slavery. Carol Nader (*The Age* 5 August 2008) reports that trafficking in unborn babies has increased in poorer countries where women are being coaxed from their countries with a few hundred dollars on the promise their children would have better lives. Instead the babies are born into slavery and prostitution or are deliberately maimed and forced to beg. Chief Federal Magistrate John Pascoe has said many of the women gave birth and then had no idea what had happened to their babies who were not registered and never legally existed. There is evidence that some had their organs removed for transplantation or their tissue was used for 'health' procedures. Some were recruited as child soldiers or groomed as athletes.

Don't get your knockers in a knit

The fashion police are alive and kicking at Royal Ascot racecourse. Women have been advised not to attend the race track knickerless, with false tans, bare midriffs, in mini skirts or with spaghetti straps. The racing season at Royal Ascot is attended by Her Maj The Queen and organisers have been advised that formal wear is required. Stewards will be on watch to ensure no bare bums are revealed by wayward gusts of wind.

'Falling from grace...'

Sophie King aged 20 has been awarded \$A14 900 in compensation by a court in the United Kingdom. The payout was in respect of an ankle injury which required surgery and time off work. The injury was caused when the heel of Sophie's 'strappy black peep-toe stilettos with six centimetre heels' broke while she was enjoying a night out with her friends in Manchester. Sophie had paid 35 British pounds for the offending shoes.

Get over it?

Victims of rape in Britain have been deeply offended by the Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority's policies on compensation for rape. Payments to victims of rape have been reduced if they had been drinking before being attacked. One woman, who believes she was raped after her drink was spiked, said it 'felt like a slap in the face' when her award was reduced by 25 per cent. Girlie remembers a similar situation in Victoria where, in the 1970s, a crimes compensation commissioner was always happy to proclaim publicly that women who had been raped should not be compensated unless they could prove physical injury.

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