

the rest of our world

Didn't Get the Memo

SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA — Catholics are among the least homophobic people in Australia, despite the church's leaders railing against gay rights, according to a study reported last month in the *Sydney Morning Herald*.

The Australia Institute study, *Mapping Homophobia in Australia*, reported that two-thirds of Baptists and evangelical Christians believe homosexuality to be immoral. But Catholics, Anglicans, and Uniting church members are the most tolerant, with only a third saying homosexuality is immoral.

Report co-author Dr. Clive Hamilton said Catholic Church views on homosexuality were among the highest profile in the country. "These counter-intuitive findings suggest that the Catholic Church has less doctrinal authority over its congregation than some other Christian and non-Christian churches."

Of the 25,000 people surveyed those who said they had no religion were the most tolerant on the issue, with only 19 per cent saying homosexuality was immoral.

Of male youths in the 14-to-17 age group 43 per cent consider homosexuality to be immoral compared with 23 per cent of young women.

Gay Tourists Spend More

PHILADELPHIA — Just 14 months after the launch of the Philadelphia gay-friendly tourism marketing campaign, gay travelers are spending 30 percent more than they did before the effort debuted, up from \$179 per day in 2003 to \$233 a day in 2004. As reported by U.S. Newswire, *Gay Tourism 2005*, a new research study conducted by the Greater Philadelphia Tourism Marketing Corporation, also revealed that for every \$1 GPTMC invests in gay tourism marketing, \$153 is returned in direct visitor spending.

"The Gay Tourism 2005 report gives unprecedented insight into the powerful economic return that gay travel can bring to a destination," said Deborah Diamond, Ph.D., GPTMC research director. "We were surprised to learn that gay

overnight visitors spend nearly double that of our general overnight visitors, \$233 compared to \$101 respectively."

Gay Tourism 2005 also contains a groundbreaking section dedicated solely to the region's lesbian visitors. "Gay Tourism 2005 is significant because the findings challenge many preconceived notions about the economic strength of the lesbian travel segment," said Thomas Roth, president of Community Marketing, Inc.

Thailand OKs Gay Soldiers

BANGKOK, THAILAND — Last month, the government of Thailand removed restrictions on gays and transsexuals serving in the military, according to 365gay.com. Thailand has a draft but gays and transsexuals, under the "mental disorder" exemption, have been barred from serving.

All Thai men at the age of 20 are required by law to register to serve. Recruits are selected through a lottery system, but each year thousands of LGBT draftees have been rejected. The military announced that it was removing homosexuality and transgenderism from its list of mental disorders following years of complaints from the LGBT community that the ban was discriminatory.

Queer Romance

BOSTON — The Romance Writers of America have accepted openly gay novelist Scott Pomfret as a full-fledged member. The RWA is the premier professional association for writers of Harlequin-style romance novels. Together with his real-life romantic partner Scott Whittier, Pomfret is co-author of the *Romantics* series of romance novels for gay men. In June 2005 Warner Books published the latest *Romantics* novel, *Hot Sauce*, as reported in a *Romantics* Books press release.

Commenting on his welcome to the organization, Pomfret said, "It's nice to see that an organization like the RWA is open to recognizing that romance is not a 'hetero-only' institution and that gay men have romantic lives, and needs, as strong as any Harlequin hero-

ine." Whittier added, "Because the RWA has traditionally focused on straight romance for women, is conservative, and is based in Texas, we were apprehensive about Scott's application, so we were pleasantly surprised to find there was room at the table for *Romantics*, too."

Cherokee Marriage Battle

TAHLEQUAH, OK — Kathy Reynolds and Dawn McKinley were content living in quiet anonymity, raising a child, and hoping to grow old together. And, as reported in the *Washington Post* early last month, a complex legal battle was not on their agenda.

But when Dawn was barred from Kathy's hospital room because she was not family, the couple brought the battle over same-sex marriage to Indian country.

In May 2004, Reynolds and McKinley, citizens of the Cherokee Nation, applied for and were issued a marriage certificate. Their marriage was performed by a licensed minister certified by the Cherokee Nation on Cherokee land. Family, friends and media attended.

When Reynolds and McKinley tried to file their application with the tribe, they found that a tribal judge had issued an injunction prohibiting the marriage under Cherokee law. The Cherokee Tribal Council unanimously passed a measure limiting marriage to a union between a man and woman, thus nullifying the marriage.

In early August, the Judicial Appeals Tribunal of the Cherokee Nation, the highest Cherokee court, rejected the petition to block the marriage, as reported in a National Center for Lesbian Rights press release.

"We are so happy that the Court dismissed the case. Our relationship is precious to us and we're grateful for all the support we've received from throughout the world," the couple said.

Irish Eyes Smile

DUBLIN, IRELAND — This predominantly Catholic country is continuing to move towards legal recognition for lesbian and gay couples, with senior government officials admitting the change

will be coming soon.

Speculation that proposals for laws recognizing same-sex couples will be drawn up in the coming months was confirmed by Michael McDowell, the country's Minister for Justice last month, as reported at Gay.com. McDowell made one of the most concrete statements in favor of new laws yet to be heard by the country's lesbian and gay communities, saying that the question of new rights for same-sex couples would be one "of 'how', not 'if'."

The government is starting discussions on a plan thought to be similar to the UK's Civil Partnership Act. It is unlikely to opt for full gay marriage, despite recent success in Spain, where the government passed full gay marriage laws earlier this year.

FBI to Investigate Arsons?

NEW YORK — After a series of arsons targeting a GLBT-friendly church in Middlebrook, Virginia, gay bars in Fayetteville, Arkansas, and Brownsville, Texas, and the torching of the home of two gay men outside Orlando, Florida, the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs has asked the FBI to investigate all of the arsons collectively.

As revealed in a NCAVP press release, Clarence Patton, who heads NCAVP and is the Acting Executive Director of the New York City Gay & Lesbian Anti-Violence Project, stated that "While there is no evidence that we're aware of at this time indicating that all the cases of arson in the Southeast and Texas are connected, or that the same individual or group is responsible for them, it is increasingly clear that there is a problem that warrants some coordinated response."

The two men who owned the mobile home found it in ruins and the words "Die Fag" spray-painted on the front steps. And later, when Paul Day and Christopher Robertson returned to retrieve some of their belongings, they found that someone had ransacked what was left, according to 365gay.com

According to NCAVP, anti-LGBT hate incidents reported to its members across the country

have risen dramatically in the last two years: 8 percent in 2003 and another 4 percent in 2004.

Iran Executes More Gay Men

LONDON — Another gay man has been executed in Iran, the third in the past month, the British newspaper, *The Observer*, reported in late August.

As reported on 365gay.com, on July 19 two gay teenagers were executed in the northeastern city of Mashhad. The hangings sparked international outrage. *The Observer* reports that it has been informed by underground Iranian activists that the latest execution occurred in the city of Arak on August 16.

The Iranian government maintains the teens had raped a 13-year-old boy, an allegation that many international rights groups discount. Lesbian and gay organizations, including the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force and the Human Rights Campaign, posted items on their sites about the executions, but as reports from a number of conservative outlets reported that the boys were executed for committing an act of rape on a 13-year-old boy, the groups removed the items from the front of their websites, according to *PageOneQ*.

Late last month, Iran activists reported that two more young Iranian men were sentenced to die on August 27 after having been convicted by a Sharia or Islamic court for alleged homosexual intercourse and "rape." The reports have not been independently verified.

The exiled Iranian gay rights group, Homan, claims the Iranian government has executed at least 4,000 gays since 1979.

Several European countries halted extraditions of Iranian gays back to country following the executions. But, both the US and Britain have been silent on the issue. ▼

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