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# world briefs

## AUSTRALIA

The state Parliament in Western Australia rejected a measure to ban discrimination based on sexual orientation Sept. 19.

State Attorney General Peter Foss explained that outlawing discrimination against homosexuals would encourage intragender sex and infringe on the rights of people who object to homosexuality.



Gay activists in the state of Tasmania launched a federal High Court challenge against the state's sodomy law Sept. 10.

The law, the last such statute in Australia, allows for 25 years' imprisonment for the crime of gay sex. It has been denounced by entities from the United Nations to Amnesty International to the Australian national government.

The federal Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission is backing the lawsuit.

## BRITAIN

Members of the activist group OutRage! picketed Saudi dissident Muhammad Al-Mass'ari and Islamic fundamentalist leader Omar Bakri Mohammad during an Islamic rally at Speakers Corner in London's Hyde Park on Sept. 8.



The rally was organized by Al-Muhajourn, a Muslim group that, according to OutRage!, "incites hatred and violence against Jews, homosexuals and Hindus."

The protesters launched a "queer jihad" against Islamic fundamentalism, declaring Omar Bakri guilty of crimes against queer humanity.

Omar Bakri responded by calling for extermination of all homosexuals.



The offices of Britain's main sexual minority newspaper, *The Pink Paper*, were torched Sept. 7.

Thirty separate fires were set in the building, and the editorial and production departments were destroyed. Damage was estimated at \$350,000.

The paper appeared on schedule Sept. 13, complete with photos of melted computers and charred ruins.

"Clearly this was a carefully planned arson attack," said a police spokesman.



A story line on the popular British television series *EastEnders* about a bisexual who falls for his girlfriend's brother has prompted a flood of calls to gay switchboards from closeted men involved in straight relationships, reported London's *The Pink Paper*.

Hundreds of men have called local help lines after each recent episode of the three-night-a-week BBC drama.

## CANADA

The Canadian Human Rights Tribunal ruled Sept. 13 that Air Canada does not have to offer a survivor pension to the lover of a gay employee. The airline already extends other benefits to partners of gay men and lesbians.

The tribunal said Air Canada was not discriminating under the Canadian Human Rights Act since employee Niels Laessoe's complaint was filed before the act was amended to ban bias based on sexual orientation.

Further, the tribunal said, it would be unreasonable—and probably unenforceable—to demand that Air Canada offer pensions to same-sex

couples before the federal government gets around to amending relevant legislation, such as the Income Tax Act and the Pension Benefits Standards Act, to bring it in line with the Human Rights Act alterations.



Fifteen gay men, lesbians and supporters marched behind a PFLAG banner in the Canada Day parade in Fredericton, New Brunswick, on July 1, reported *Wayves*, the gay and lesbian newspaper of Halifax, Nova Scotia.

It was the first time sexual minorities openly marched in any parade in the province.

Most of the thousands of spectators looked on indifferently or applauded or waved politely. A few cheered enthusiastically and a few made negative remarks, *Wayves* reported.

## COSTA RICA

The Costa Rican gay group Triangulo Rosa has expanded to the Caribbean coastal city of Limón.

Initially, the group will host Sunday afternoon workshops on AIDS, gay rights and gay empowerment. Eventually, a satellite office will be opened.

The residents of Limón, pop. 40,000, are mostly descended from Jamaican slaves who came to Costa Rica about 100 years ago. The economy is based on bananas and shipping.

Triangulo Rosa's phone number is 011-506-234-2411; e-mail the group at rastern@sol.racsa.co.cr.

## ROMANIA

Romania's Chamber of Deputies voted 165-20 on Sept. 10 to set the penalty for private gay sex acts at from six months to three years in prison.

Gay sex that occurs in public or creates public scandal would be punished by up to five years in prison—as would homosexual organizing or proselytizing.

The measure differs from one passed by the Senate and thus was sent to a conference committee for reconciliation.

The bill flies in the face of demands from the Council of Europe and the European Parliament that member nations—and specifically Romania—legalize homosexuality.

A Communist-era law banning same-gender sex is in force in Romania.

## SWEDEN

Swedish Member of Parliament Barbro Westerholm will travel to Brazil on Nov. 5 to lobby for a same-sex-partnership bill introduced in the Brazilian parliament by Deputy Marta Suplicy.

Polling shows that about 40 percent of Brazilians support a form of same-gender marriage, with vocal opposition coming mostly from fundamentalist Protestants.

Westerholm has a long history of queer activism. In the late 1970s, as director of the National Social Welfare Board, she removed homosexuality from Sweden's official list of medical illnesses.

## TAIWAN

The mayor of Taipei, Chen Shui-bian, will officiate at a November wedding of two gay men, reported the news page of the Planet Out World

Wide Web site. No further details were reported.

Chen also has instructed the city's Culture and Information Division to help gay men and lesbians organize a dance in a city-owned building on Christmas Eve.

Earlier this year the city granted sexual minorities a time slot on the city-owned radio station for a daily program.



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