

WORLD news BRIEFS

AUSTRALIA

Two gay venues in Melbourne have been granted exemptions to the state Equal Opportunity Act, allowing them to ban women.

Anti-Discrimination Tribunal Deputy President John Wolters agreed with petitioners that letting women into the Club 80 sex club and the Laird Hotel bar would oppress gay male patrons who, he said, need spaces of their own.

The decision was denounced by the Women's Action Alliance.

One-third of Australian HIV-positive gay men and 17 percent of HIV-negative gay men have unprotected anal sex with casual partners, according to a recent study published in the journal *AIDS Care*.

The rate climbs higher among men who use recreational drugs or employ hustlers. Among both HIV-positive and HIV-negative men, those who engage in condomless sex have intercourse more often than the average gay man, the study found.

The research was conducted by the National Centre in HIV Social Research, the National Centre in HIV Epidemiology and Clinical Research, and the AIDS Council of New South Wales.

A man who failed to tell his sex partners he had HIV was sentenced to eight years in prison March 6.

The 52-year-old Victoria businessman, whose identity was not made public, allegedly infected two men. He claims he always used a condom but prosecutors argued otherwise. DNA testing found the same strain of HIV in all three men.

Meanwhile, on March 4, an HIV-positive Victoria doctor, Christopher Denis Dirckze, 41, was forced to surrender his passport after relatives told authorities he may have been planning to flee the country. Dirckze was deregistered by the medical board last year for allegedly having unsafe sex with patients.

BAHAMAS

Hundreds marched through downtown Nassau March 8 following false reports that a visiting cruise ship, Holland America's *Veendam*, was carrying gay people. The protesters demanded new laws banning homosexual sex and gay and lesbian venues.

In January, Cayman Islands officials denied docking privileges to a cruise ship carrying 900 gay men. The same cruise was due to stop in the Bahamas later in its voyage, and protesters took to the streets of Nassau even as the ship turned away due to stormy weather.

BRITAIN

A new survey of teachers in England and Wales finds verbal homophobic bullying takes place at 80 percent of schools. Twenty-six percent of schools also reported anti-gay assaults.

A report on the research, entitled *Playing It Safe*, was released March 12 by the gay group Stonewall and the AIDS organization Terrence Higgins Trust.

BULGARIA

Parliament passed a measure March 9 requiring foreigners who visit for more than one month to take an HIV test.

Bulgaria has recorded 219 cases of HIV infection.

CANADA

Chrysler Canada was ordered by an arbitrator March 11 to provide benefits to employees' same-sex partners. All benefits were included in the mandate except pensions.



During 1996 bargaining, General Motors agreed to a Canadian Auto Workers demand for same-sex spousal benefits, but Chrysler and Ford refused to extend their policies.

The Canadian Supreme Court heard a same-sex alimony case March 18.

The lesbian couple that launched the case settled out of court, but the Ontario government still wants the Supreme Court to rule on a lower court decision that invalidated the provincial Family Law Act's heterosexist definition of "common-law couple."

If the earlier ruling is upheld, around 90 other provincial laws that define "spouse" heterosexually also may need to be rewritten.

MALAYSIA

In mid-March, Health Minister Chua Jui Ment told the Immigration Department to send home 1,030 legal foreign workers because they tested positive for HIV, hepatitis, tuberculosis or venereal disease.

The workers came from Pakistan, Thailand, the Philippines, India and Myanmar (formerly Burma). They were identified via mandatory health exams.

SCOTLAND

Pioneering gay activist Ian Dunn, 54, died unexpectedly March 10.

In the 1960's Dunn cofounded the Scottish Minorities Group, which became the Scottish Homosexual Rights Group and is now OUT-RIGHT Scotland. He was serving as OUT-RIGHT's convener at the time of his death.

Dunn is survived by his partner, Ross Watt.

SWEDEN

Starting in April, Umea University on the north coast will offer the nation's first gay studies course. The history class will track homosexuality in Sweden from the 18th century to the present.

"Gay and lesbian studies are quite an important subject in the Netherlands and some U.S. universities, but no such course exists in Sweden," lecturer Svante Norrhem told reporters. "We thought we would make the first move."

THAILAND

AIDS activists are denouncing a government-backed plan to set up a 10,000-bed AIDS colony at a Buddhist monastery in Lop Buri.

The "community rehabilitation center," which already operates privately on a much smaller scale, would needlessly separate people with AIDS from the rest of society, critics say.

"Instead of being able to create a better understanding in society that AIDS victims can lead a normal life without spreading the virus to others...a separate colony would make it all the more difficult for society to understand them," says Jon Ungphakorn of the AIDS organization Access.

The present facility houses about 500 people with AIDS and has turned away thousands who want to live there, reports the *Bangkok Post*.

Compiled by Rex Wockner

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