

WORLD news

they haven't left us alone. They sent the cops in to check the smoking. They sent the water guys in to check our meters. They just don't leave us alone. They obviously want us out of the area."

City officials deny they are anti-gay and say the 1979 Johannesburg Town Planning Scheme zoned the block "Business 1," which allows shops or restaurants but not nightclubs. Grant was given until mid-November to remove discotheque equipment, pool tables, video monitors and other items that make the buildings "places of amusement."



Ian Thorpe (second from right) loves his teammates dearly but not queerly

INDIA

Indian transsexuals blocked intercity trains Nov. 1 near Calcutta to protest a new policy banning them from traveling in women's compartments. Some of the protesters removed garments to prove they don't have male sex organs.

Railway officials argued that the transsexuals are not women and said biological women complain when the transsexuals are allowed to ride in women's coaches. The protest ended when police dispersed the demonstrators.

TURKEY

Turkey's gay activist groups held their ninth national meeting from Oct. 26 to 29 in Istanbul to discuss "What Do Gays and Lesbians Want?"

They denounced "obscure statements in laws such as 'general morals' and 'shameful crimes' [that] are used against us" and said anti-gay discrimination in housing and employment is rampant. "We are subject to humiliation, exclusion, threats and violence in the houses, streets, schools, workplaces, hospitals, public and private institutions," the conferees declared.

They demanded that "sexual orientation" be added to the article of the nation's constitution prohibiting discrimination. The attendees cited other ongoing problems: Lesbians who divorce their husbands are denied custody of their children; trans people regularly are beaten and murdered; schools, the military and the medical profession are routinely hostile to gays; and the media treat trans people as freaks or sex objects and caricature gays.

AUSTRALIA

It's perfectly fine if people think he's gay even though he's not, Australian swimmer Ian Thorpe says.

"I think it's because when I speak at engagements I try to speak as well as I possibly can," the Olympic gold medalist told the Australian Broadcasting Corporation on Nov. 17. "I try to be articulate, I don't put on a slang, I don't try and sound macho, with an Australian accent, just for the sake of having it. I have an interest in fashion, I have interests in things most people don't label as being part of the macho male thing. It's the most flattering thing that anyone can ever say [that I'm gay] because if someone wants to label you or claim you as part of a minority group, it means you must have some strength in your character or in what you do."

Gay couples in the isolated state of Tasmania will gain the right to register their relationships and adopt children next year, the government said Oct. 31. No other Australian state offers gay registered partnership, and only West Australia allows gay adoption.

"If we consider adoptions are appropriate for heterosexuals, then it is appropriate for gays,"

state Attorney General Judy Jackson said. "Some heterosexual couples choose not to marry, but they have the choice. This move will give gay couples the choice to register their relationship if they wish; it will be a contract."

Meanwhile, gay couples in the state of Queensland, whose largest city is Brisbane, learned Nov. 6 they will gain access to spousal rights. The government introduced reforms into Parliament granting same-sex couples nearly every right of marriage that can be conferred on the state level, in areas such as health care, death benefits, workers' compensation and superannuation schemes, the *Queensland Pride* newspaper reported.

The reforms also will ban discrimination against trans people and prohibit vilification based on sexual orientation or gender identity. "The sexuality of a person is simply not a reason for them to be harassed or assaulted," state Attorney General Rod Welford said.



Judy Jackson

CANADA

The Northwest Territories Legislative Assembly protected gays and trans people Nov. 1. The act created a human rights commission and banned discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, among other factors.

All Canadian provinces and territories except Nunavut now ban discrimination against gay, lesbian and bi people. Nunavut, created in a split from the Northwest Territories in 1999, is considering human rights legislation.

SPAIN

Partners of gay people in Spain's paramilitary national police force, the Guardia Civil, now can live with them in barracks.

The determination followed a request from an officer stationed in Palma de Mallorca in Spain's Balearic Islands. He is now on medical leave to recover from "psychological problems" caused by media interest in his request, according to the Spanish news wire service EFE.

VIETNAM

A total of 30 men in Ho Chi Minh City were arrested and sent to an "education center" Nov. 6 for having sex in the sauna of a fitness center.

"Such mass homosexual conduct breaches administration regulations and is harmful to social order," a police spokesman told news agencies. "We have sent them to an education school to warn them against further similar infringements." □

Compiled by REX WOCKNER, who has reported for the gay press since 1985. He has a bachelor's degree in journalism from Drake University and started his career as a radio reporter.



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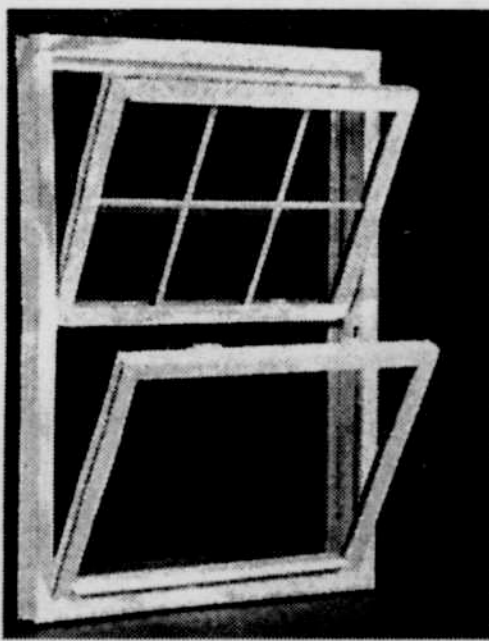
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