

WORLD news

Leading Tasmanian gay activists Nick Toonen, Richard Hale and Rodney Croome were honored with the Order of Australia last month for their gay rights work. The investiture occurred at Government House in Hobart.

The order, which is bestowed by the queen, is the nation's highest honor. It recognizes outstanding achievement in important fields of endeavor and outstanding contributions to the nation and humanity.

"Really what these awards recognize are the tens of thousands of people in Tasmania, across Australia and around the world who contributed to the success of the nine-year campaign for gay law reform," Toonen said.

Hale added: "These awards recognize our defiance in the face of bigotry and oppression. I'd like to encourage everyone to do what we did: break unjust laws, take direct action and build their communities."

Croome commented: "Who could have imagined that when we were arrested for setting up a stall in Salamanca Market in 1988 we would be honored like this 15 years later?"

A total of 130 arrests took place at the outdoor Saturday morning market from October to December 1988 as members of the Tasmanian Gay and Lesbian Rights Group defied a police and City Council ban on their booth and collected signatures on a petition calling for repeal of the state's law against gay sex. The council eventually relented (in a 6-3 vote), renounced its previous actions and paid the activists' legal fees.

Gay sex was finally decriminalized in 1997.

The state of Tasmania OK'd the nation's first partnership registry Aug. 29. It will come into effect Jan. 1.

The legislation creating the registry passed the Legislative Council by a vote of 7-5. It had passed the House of Assembly earlier, 22-3.

The law grants couples—whether the relationship is sexual or not, whether they live together or not and whether they even choose to register or not—a broad range of matrimonial rights and allows registered individuals to adopt a partner's biological child. Tasmanian Attorney General Judy Jackson said "the registration model passed...stands alone as the best scheme of registration nationally and internationally."

COLOMBIA

Conservatives and other supporters of President Alvaro Uribe Vélez killed a gay civil union bill Aug. 26 in Colombia's Senate.

They blocked both a vote and further debate on the measure, which would have extended spousal rights to registered same-sex couples in areas such as job benefits, insurance, pensions, social security, alimony, inheritance, health care

decisions and family violence. It also would have banned discrimination based on "sexual identity, gender or orientation."

The vote to block was 55-32 with 15 abstentions. Sen. Piedad Córdoba, lead sponsor of the bill, plans to reintroduce it in a future session.

Three ex-presidents of Colombia spoke in support of the measure. Alfonso López Michelsen, Julio César Turbay and César Gaviria Trujillo, who now is secretary general of the Organization of American States, all lobbied for its passage.



A colorful contingent came out for this year's Europride parade Aug. 24 in Manchester, England



UNITED KINGDOM

Police officers marching in their uniforms and gay actor Sir Ian McKellen were big hits at the Europride parade Aug. 24 in Manchester, England. The event moves to a different European city each year.

"The parade featured jugglers, fire eaters, stilt walkers, royal look-alikes, Wonder Woman and characters from *The Wizard of Oz*," the *Manchester Evening News* said.

The lead contingent was the world's largest rainbow flag. Flag creator Gilbert Baker constructed the quarter-mile-long monster to celebrate the gay symbol's 25th anniversary.

ARGENTINA

One of Buenos Aires' major daily newspapers, *Crónica*, has launched a weekly gay supplement.

The 16-page premiere issue featured a cover photo of the city's first "civil-unioned" gay couple kissing. "I suspect BA is the only city in the world where a major newspaper includes a free gay supplement each week," local activist Tom Hanks said.

Buenos Aires began offering gay civil unions July 18. Registered couples receive spousal rights in areas such as insurance, health care, hospital visitation and bank loans. **J**

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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