

# SERVING IN SILENCE?

## SERVING IN SILENCE?

Australian **LGBTI** Military  
Service since World War II

**This exhibition commemorates not just the 25th anniversary of open service, but also the contributions that LGBTI service personnel have been making since the Second World War.**

**ON 23 NOVEMBER 1992, THE KEATING LABOR GOVERNMENT made a momentous decision: to lift the ban on gays, lesbians and bisexuals serving in the Australian Defence Force (ADF). This was before traditional alliance partners New Zealand, the United Kingdom and the United States, and it represented a significant step in Australia's march towards LGBTI equality. It was not an end, though; gays and lesbians still experienced discrimination in the ADF, and there would continue to be a transgender ban until September 2010. Intersex people never had an explicit policy and, depending on their intersex variation, may be allowed to serve. Even before these milestones, LGBTI people were serving in Australia's defence forces, fighting in wars overseas, participating in peacekeeping missions and serving within Australia. For over a century their stories have been silent; it is time to hear their voices.**

THIS EXHIBITION DERIVES FROM RESEARCH BEING CONDUCTED AS PART OF AN AUSTRALIAN RESEARCH COUNCIL DISCOVERY PROJECT ON THE HISTORY OF LGBTI MILITARY SERVICE. WE HAVE BEEN EXAMINING ARCHIVAL RECORDS, MEDIA REPORTS, PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES AND, MOST IMPORTANTLY, INTERVIEWING MORE THAN 100 LGBTI SERVICE MEMBERS, PAST AND PRESENT. THOUGH WE COULD NOT INCLUDE EVERYONE'S STORIES IN THIS EXHIBITION, WE ARE GRATEFUL TO ALL OUR INTERVIEWEES FOR SHARING THEIR LIFE STORIES.

ALL EFFORTS HAVE BEEN MADE TO OBTAIN COPYRIGHT PERMISSIONS FOR PHOTOGRAPHS AND DOCUMENTS.



Australian **LGBTI** Military  
Service since World War II



Defence **LGBTI** Milestones

**After pressure from the US, the Australian Army adopts a policy to arrange medical discharges for homosexuals.**

**JUNE  
1944**

*“... getting in  
with the  
Kamp  
crowd...”*

# The War History They Don't Teach You at School

CAPTION:  
Cyril Howe, a later figure  
on Melbourne's kamp scene,  
photographed two men  
performing in drag. This was  
a common form of troop  
entertainment and, for  
kamp service members,  
a way to express themselves.

IN 1943, AUSTRALIA'S MILITARY HEADQUARTERS in Melbourne received some disturbing news from US Army investigators in Port Moresby, Papua. They had discovered that Australian soldiers were engaging in sex with American soldiers and, even worse perhaps, were practising 'the female side of homosexual intercourse'. (This adds weight to the American novelist Gore Vidal's assertion that 'During World War II, the Australian soldiers had a reputation for rolling over on their stomachs most obediently'.) While the brass investigated, the Chief Medical Officer struck out on his own, interviewing 18 soldiers who had either been caught by the investigators, or who came forward voluntarily. The deal seems to have been that if they shared their stories with the Medical Officer, they would be given medical (as opposed to dishonourable) discharges, and sent home.

Their stories reveal a vibrant homosexual life among the soldiers stationed in New Guinea – days and nights full of pleasures and conviviality. Many of them referred to themselves as 'the girls', who, having found each other, proceeded to become close friends, partying together and sharing sexual adventures. Neil declared that since arriving in Port Moresby and 'getting in with the Kamp crowd' he had been out every night. Morrie said the same. The American Red Cross canteen was a popular place to gather, to cruise and to pick up and it was here that Gerald first got to be part of the kamp scene. Jack added the troops' canteen and the sergeants' club as popular cruising spots. The beaches and the dense, encroaching bush provided privacy, as did air-raid shelters and trucks. The scene provided a variety of sexual and romantic opportunities, from casual pickups, to short passionate flings, to long-term love affairs.



*"The Comforts Food made a mistake, Sir."*

CAPTION:  
This Second World War  
cartoon mocks some of  
the humour attached to  
cross-dressing servicemen.

CAPTION:  
Port Moresby, where many  
soldiers were investigated  
for homosexual conduct.



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***Truth* runs a cover story reporting on an “unsavory cell of homosexuals” in the national service training camp at Puckapunyal, discharging five men immediately.**

**JUNE  
1956**



# When the War was Over

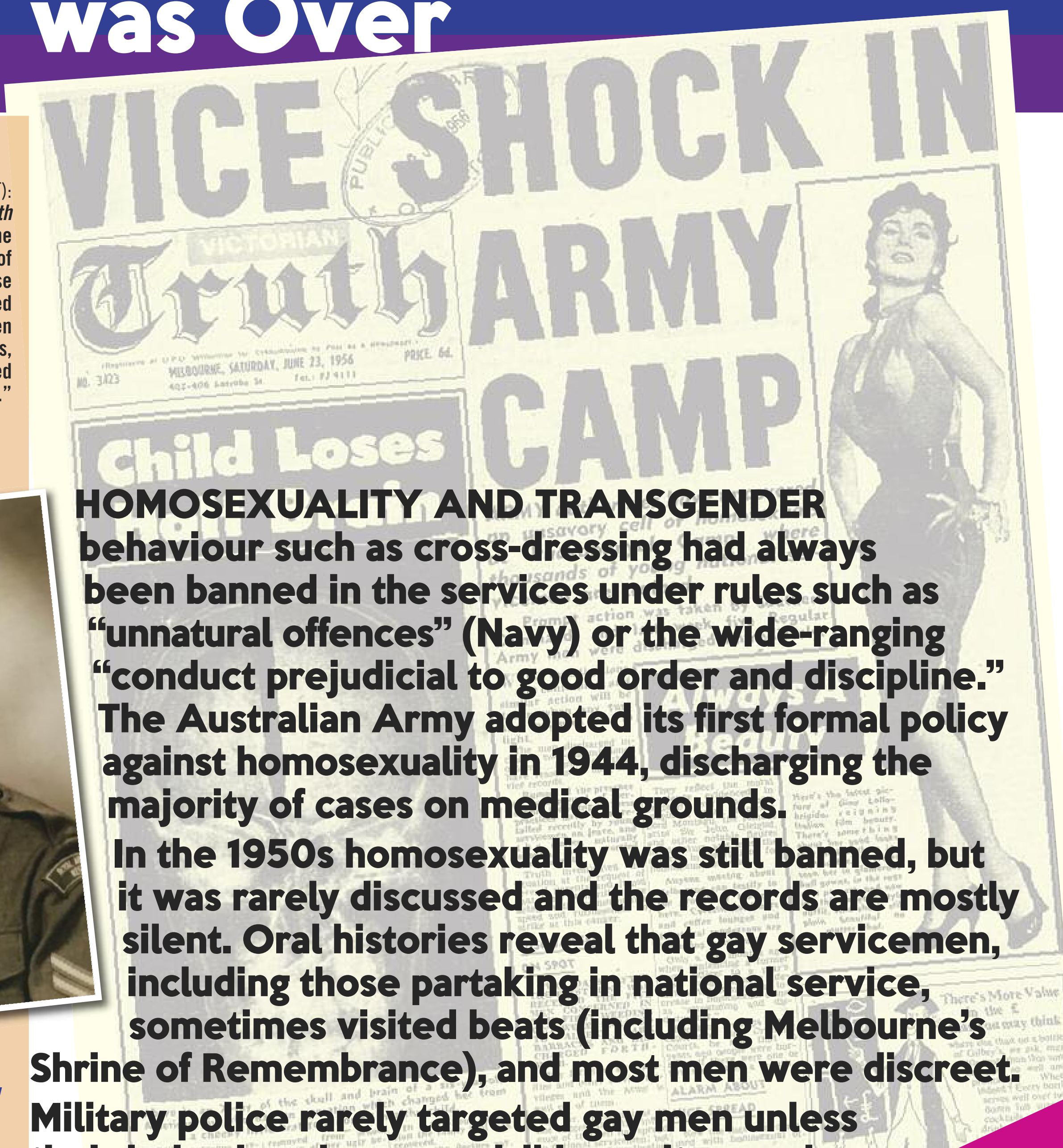
CAPTION (RIGHT): This 1956 article from *Truth* reported, "Rumours of the presence in Puckapunyal of personnel indulging in these practices have been recalled recently by young servicemen on leave, and the stories, naturally enough, have worried their parents."



*Gay men also served in the Korean War and Malayan Emergency. TOM GOLDSBY, who served in both conflicts, even had a relationship with a Chinese-Malay man. When the man dedicated a love song to Tom over the radio, his platoon heard it with amusement.*

TOM GOLDSBY served first with the British Army from 1947-52 and then immigrated to Australia, serving in the Australian Army from 1952-58. He passed away in 2013 and photos are courtesy of his partner of 41 years, Graham Jamieson.

**HOMOSEXUALITY AND TRANSGENDER** behaviour such as cross-dressing had always been banned in the services under rules such as "unnatural offences" (Navy) or the wide-ranging "conduct prejudicial to good order and discipline." The Australian Army adopted its first formal policy against homosexuality in 1944, discharging the majority of cases on medical grounds. In the 1950s homosexuality was still banned, but it was rarely discussed and the records are mostly silent. Oral histories reveal that gay servicemen, including those partaking in national service, sometimes visited beats (including Melbourne's Shrine of Remembrance), and most men were discreet. Military police rarely targeted gay men unless their behaviour became visible – witnessed most dramatically when five soldiers were discharged from the national service training base at Puckapunyal in Victoria.



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Australian **LGBTI** Military Service since World War II

## Women in the Services During World War II

**WOMEN PLAYED AN ACTIVE ROLE DURING WORLD WAR II** not only on the home front, but also about 70,000 served in the women's auxiliary services. Life in the services meant that women who were attracted to other women were able to live in an environment dominated by women. The services also provided an opportunity to break away from social expectations around marriage and family. Recruitment material produced by the services emphasised the femininity of women who served, perhaps in order to address social concerns that military service would produce 'masculine' women. Women who were attracted to other women did manage to find each other in the services, although the consequences of being caught were severe. Historian Ruth Ford interviewed one woman, Betty, who described two women in the Women's Royal Australian Naval Service (WRANS) who were discharged after they were caught kissing in the boiler room.

*Bulletin*, 18 March 1942

This cartoon suggests that military service resulted in the loss of women's femininity. There is also an implication that the women may be a couple.



*The services also provided an opportunity to break away from social expectations around marriage and family.*





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*NOLA STRAWBRIDGE, who managed to avoid detection by officials, remembers a "big purge" of lesbians in the Women's Royal Australian Army Corps (WRAAC) between 1964-65. Six women she knew were discharged.*



*WHILE MANY WOMEN were discharged from the Services after their sexuality was exposed, CAROLE POPHAM and CHRISTINA DENNIS opted to leave the WRAAF on their own choice in 1968 after falling in love. They knew that there was a possibility that they would be posted separately or face other consequences if their relationship was discovered. They are still happily together today.*



CAPTION (TOP):  
A Christmas play at the WRAAF barracks at Richmond, 1960s.  
Courtesy Carole Popham and Christina Dennis.

CAPTION (ABOVE):  
Sports proved a popular way to meet other lesbian women in the services. This photograph was taken in the 1960s and includes Nola Strawbridge (second from left) and Julie Hendy (second from right).  
Courtesy of Julie Hendy.

CAPTION (RIGHT):  
Carole Popham and Christina Dennis, 1968.  
Courtesy of Carole Popham and Christina Dennis.

CAPTION (BELOW):  
Julie Hendy, who had been previously identified as a servicewoman with exceptional talent and had undertaken a rare overseas posting, was discharged in 1968 after her sexuality was discovered.  
Courtesy of Julie Hendy.

## Women in the Services After World War II

**BETWEEN 1951 AND 1984, EACH SERVICE operated separate female-only branches. Once again, lesbian and bisexual women made a significant contribution. These women had to carefully guard their sexuality as they faced persecution, punishment and discharge if it became known to officials. Witch-hunts loomed frequently. Women suspected of being lesbians were interrogated – often for long periods of time, asked to name others and were quickly discharged. These practices primarily targeted only the women's services until the mid-1970s.**



*JULIE HENDY's very promising career in the WRAAC ended with a discharge with "Service no longer required" in 1968 after her sexuality was discovered.*





Defence **LGBTI** Milestones

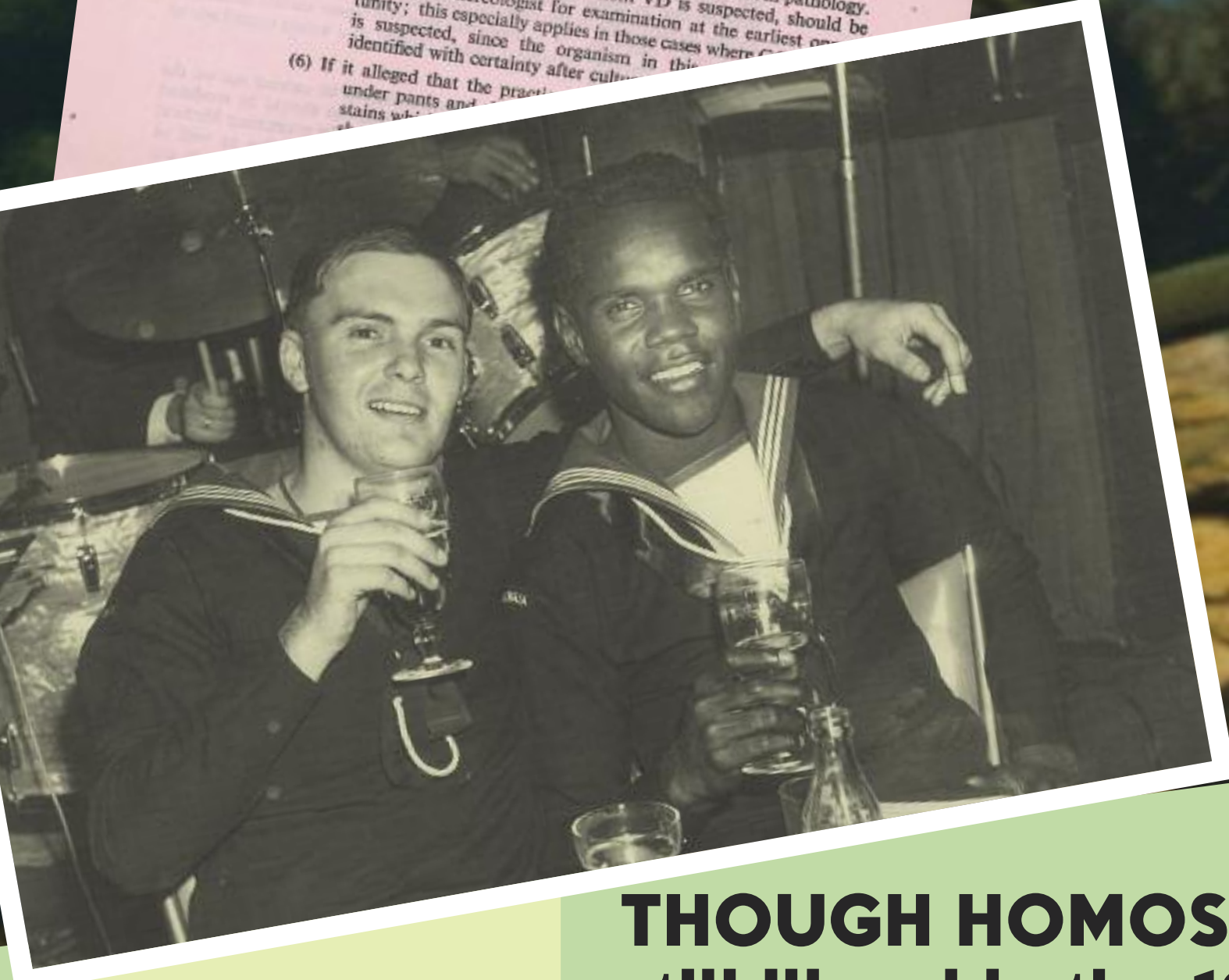
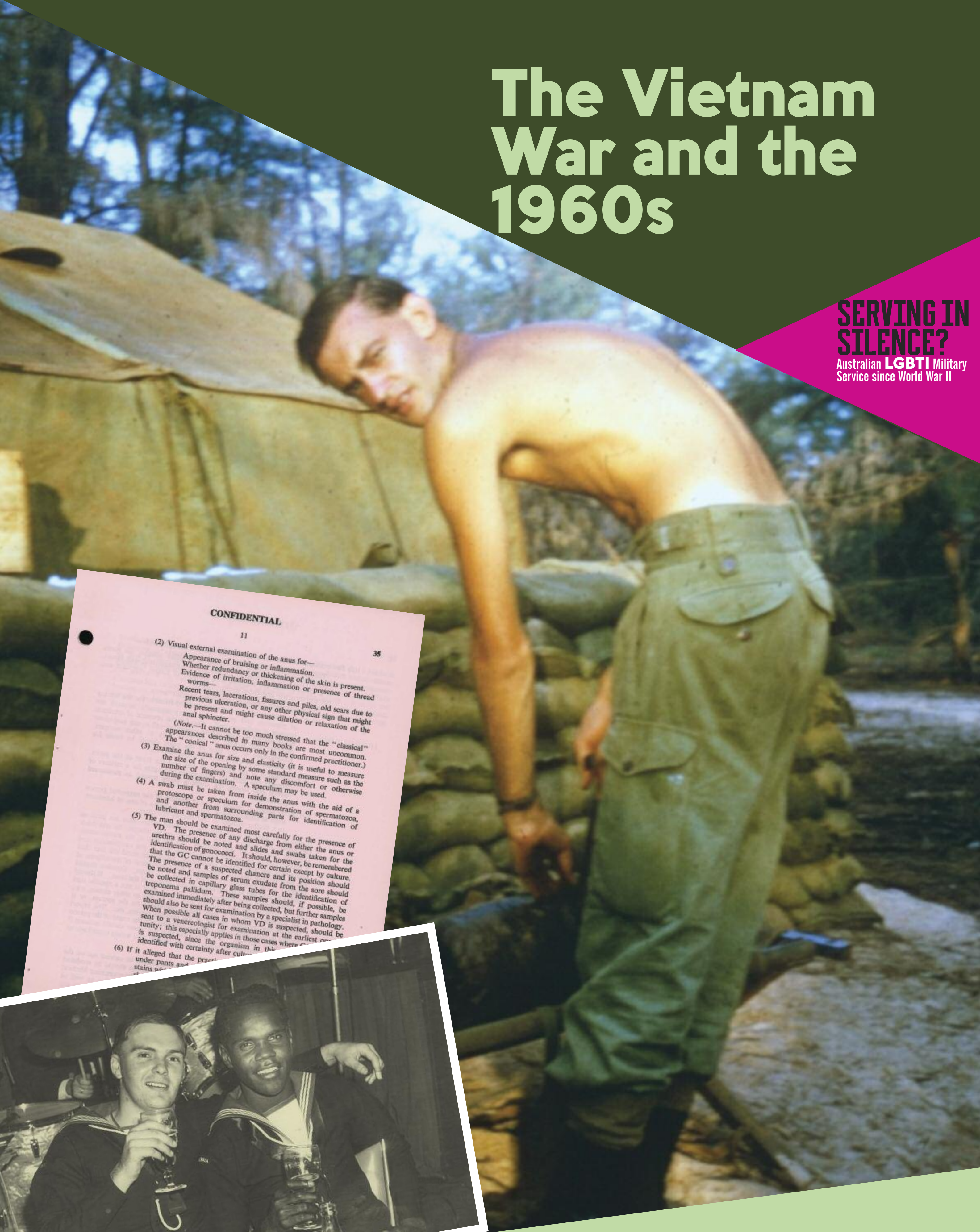
**Royal Australian Navy adopts a policy on “Abnormal Sexual Behaviour” in addition to an existing policy on “Unnatural Offences”.**

**1969**



# The Vietnam War and the 1960s

**SERVING IN SILENCE?**  
Australian **LGBTI** Military Service since World War II



CAPTION (MAIN IMAGE):  
Dr David Bradford served in Vietnam as a medical officer in 1967-68. Bradford developed an interest in sexual health during his tour and later was at the forefront of treating AIDS patients in the 1980s-90s.

CAPTION (MIDDLE):  
Excerpts from 1966 regulation against “Unnatural Offences”, outlining invasive medical examinations for suspected homosexual men.

CAPTION (ABOVE):  
Dennis Jeffrey (left) served as a Leading Cook from 1969-74, including a tour to Vietnam on the HMAS Vendetta. He is pictured here with his mate P.J. Powhoo.

**THOUGH HOMOSEXUAL CONDUCT WAS still illegal in the 1960s and '70s, authorities often turned a blind eye to men who were discreet. This was particularly the case for officers.**

**Numerous gay men served in Vietnam, though many either did not yet realise that they were gay or did not participate in homosexual activity while in Vietnam. Of course, some did – Dr David Bradford recalls an occasion when his regimental sergeant major brought an American private back to his tent for some very loud sex.**

**From the Navy, gay sailors recall numerous sexual encounters on ships, and there was even a homosexual subculture at the base HMAS Creswell. The Navy still had specific rules against “Unnatural Offences” and “Abnormal Sexual Behaviour”. Contained within these regulations were provisions to differentiate the “confirmed homosexual” from those who were experimenting, or those claiming to be homosexual only to secure a discharge. Enforcement of these rules against homosexuality would step up in all three services after 1974.**



***CAMP Ink* publishes a story about a dismissed lesbian from the WRAAF; mainstream coverage prompts the Defence Minister to order the services to come up with a consistent policy on homosexuality.**

**1973**



**First tri-service approach to homosexuality establishes a framework whereby service police investigate all cases. Those found to be homosexuals may either request their own honourable discharge or be discharged dishonourably.**

**1974**



Any suspected case of homosexuality was to be referred to the service police to investigate.

**ALIX BLUNDELL** was involved in **CAMP** while a University of Queensland student in the 1970s. She joined the Army Reserve as an officer in 1976 and became full-time in 1987. In 1989 she underwent an excruciating interrogation and was dismissed for being a lesbian. In 2015, as part of the Defence Abuse Response Taskforce (DART), Alix received compensation and a personal apology from the Chief of Army for the mistreatment that ended her career.

## Speaking Out

**SERVING IN SILENCE?**  
Australian **LGBTI** Military Service since World War II

IN 1973, THE GAY RIGHTS ORGANISATION THE Campaign Against Moral Persecution (CAMP) published a story titled "So You Want to be a WRAAF" (Women's Royal Australian Air Force), detailing the intimidating surveillance and interview conducted against a lesbian WRAAF member. When the story reached the mainstream media, the Defence Minister ordered the services to come up with a consistent policy that "should be liberal, understanding, and designed to cause the least embarrassment in such situations whilst safeguarding the interests of the Service." The new policy in place from 1974 remained relatively unchanged for the next eighteen years. Any suspected case of homosexuality was to be referred to the service police to investigate. Unless there was a crime involved, they were to be dealt with administratively. Gays and lesbians either could request their own honourable discharge, or would be discharged dishonourably. The policy said that suspects should be dealt with "sympathetically and with discretion", though this was rarely the case.

**TONY WHELAN** was a national serviceman from 1969-71 and later became a member of **CAMP WA** and **WA Gay Liberation**. He was not an activist around the military ban, but he was involved in forming the **WA AIDS Council** in 1985 and advocating for the decriminalisation of homosexuality in WA in 1989.



## For Queen & Country

You wouldn't read about it.....but we did on January 25th, in the three Sydney morning newspapers. Five sailors were kicked out of the Royal Australian Navy for homosexual activities. The reports in the Sydney papers were practically identical, stating simply that the Navy Minister, Mr. Killen, had confirmed that the men were dismissed as "unsuitable" and he was quoted as stating that "the activities could be described only as quite depraved".

The report in the "Australian" was rather amusing. The report of the day after the report about the Navy Minister's statement was that the Navy Minister had said that the men were dismissed as "unsuitable" and he was quoted as stating that "the activities could be described only as quite depraved".

CAPTION:  
**CAMP Ink** reported on five sailors dismissed for homosexuality in January 1971.

CAPTION (BELOW):  
This 1973 article in **CAMP Ink** led the Defence Minister to call for a consistent policy on homosexuality.

## so you want to be a WRAAF

Some, few, homosexuals are fortunate enough to have jobs where their homosexuality is an asset but for the vast majority job discrimination is a constant threat.

Peter Bonsall-Boone recently publicised this fact. His dismissal from his job as church secretary gained him lots of sympathy but no jobs and very little interest in anti-discrimination legislation.

Mostly, however, homosexuals are sacked without fuss and with few people ever knowing the reason. Sacking seldom forces homosexuals out of their closets, rather it closes the door a little more tightly. For having lost one job a homosexual will try to ensure that it doesn't happen again. This means more conscious hiding and greater damage to the personality.

These factors make it difficult for Camp Ink to give job discrimination the full coverage it deserves. They also make it difficult for the branches of CAMP to prepare well documented material for submission to Trade Unions and legislators. We are grateful to the young woman for agreeing to tell us about her ordeal with the Australian Air Force.

We hope that her story, contained in the following interview, will encourage more homosexuals to tell their story.

From what age did you feel you were a lesbian?

When I actually knew I was about 19 and in the Air Force.

How did this happen?

I met a girl and a friendship developed into a very strong friendship and it just grew from there. I should imagine that she would have had a previous experience and strong feelings before.

Then you?

lesbians. We just accepted it, we didn't talk about it. We hadn't any idea that there were so many people around like us. It was incredible I thought we were most unusual.

Did this worry you at all?

No not really. It was a bit inconvenient because soon after my friend was posted to Sydney and I was still in Canberra so I had to travel up to Sydney every weekend. But I wasn't living with my family so I didn't have to explain to anyone.

So you wouldn't admit it to your family?

No. Not at that stage. But I have told them since.

How did they react?

My mother was pretty upset. She still finds it difficult to accept.

What did they actually do?

The service police took me down to headquarters in the city of Melbourne. They didn't say very much. They sat me down in an office and the two service policemen and one service policeman started questioning me.

What sort of things were going through your mind on the drive down?

Fortunately I found it all rather amusing. Which was lucky because normally I'd probably break up. But my friend had told me exactly what to expect. The service police had told her not to say anything to me which of course she ignored. She came back and told me the whole story. That night we went out with a friend of hers, a man who claimed that the

nicest girls on the base were lesbians and his wife was in Queensland so whenever he wanted female company he would take us quite a happy relationship. Anyway he was very concerned and the night she came back from the service police we went out with him for a few drinks and discussed the whole thing even though she had been told not to.

Then I was called in. I wasn't very happy when I was in the office being questioned, by three people.

The two women asked me the most

questioned, by three people.

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They kept getting back to girls, they wanted to know if they knew any of them.

How long did this questioning go on?

Well I was there for eight hours.

What you mean you were questioned for eight hours straight?

No I had lunch.

You must be joking?

No. In fact what infuriated my mother was that there wasn't a doctor or medical practitioner to ask me the personal questions if they wanted to know the whole sexual detail bit. But I can't see why they needed to know all that. All they needed to do was to ask me if I was a lesbian and then ask me to resign. Anyway after the eight hours...

Was the eight hours almost solely taken up with questioning you about your actual sex life?

Yes details of each girlfriend I had and who else I knew in the Air Force. Which I didn't say much about. I just said that you hear rumours about people and you can't actually say if they are or not unless you have an association with them.

So what happened after the eight hours?

Well they gave me the choice of either writing a statement myself of getting them to write it for me. I got them to write it because by that time I was pretty shaken out. I was sort of realising what I was in for. So they wrote it out and I signed it all for. So they were keen to get out of the Air Force anyway.

Was this statement a whole detailed account?

Yes a whole detailed account of my association with the only two girls I had anything to do with in the Air Force. They knew who these two girls were before they started questioning me. They told me all the names. Where they got all their information from I don't know; they told me a lot of things that I'd forgotten. I feel that several people must have been under surveillance or something. I can't think of anybody other than my closest friends who could have told them the things they

A stimulating career that offers unlimited opportunity



Well I knew a lot of square friends of mine who used to go down to the boys barracks and sleep with them.

What sort of repercussions would they have there?

No problems. The authorities would either close their eyes to it or if they did catch them, unfortunately, they'd have to charge them and probably also charge the boys for having them there but very small compared to being asked to resign from your career.

So what happened after they found the letters?

They asked me if I wanted them back and I said no you might as well burn them time. If I'd been in the same mood and wanted to stay in I would have liked to have seen what would have happened if I didn't carry out the command to resign. They probably would have discharged me, by stating "services no longer required",

Why didn't you retaliate?

Because I was keen to get out at the time. If I'd been in the same mood and wanted to stay in I would have liked to have seen what would have happened if I didn't carry out the command to resign. They probably would have discharged me, by stating "services no longer required",

Why didn't you retaliate?

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Yes. One of couple of months to been entitled to ret to superannuation. years worth of mo she was fed up w everytime they ro She realised that because she had b So, when I was c "this is probably volunteered but me just becau psychiatrist." So up the next day took care of that

So in actual she was under was a homosex been under a p been covered?

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**ANNA VAN NETTEN** remembers “going out to the bars in Sydney, they used to send undercover female MPs, military police, and they’d find out who the lesbians were. Then they’d call them in.”

## Witch-hunts in the 1980s

CAPTION (ABOVE): Anna van Netten spent ten years as a driver in the WRAAC and remembers lesbians being targeted.

CAPTION (RIGHT): Yvonne Sillett was forced out of the Army in 1989 when her sexuality was discovered. Courtesy Yvonne Sillett.

**THE 1980S WITNESSED AN escalation in the number of witch-hunts. This was due to the growing public awareness of homosexuality and the stigma that surrounded gay men and HIV/AIDS.**

**Men who served during the 1980s describe the stress of having to compartmentalise their lives, serving in secret during the day and trying to maintain a personal life in the evenings. Women tell similar stories.**



**YVONNE SILLETT** joined the Women’s Royal Australian Army Corps in 1979. Rising rapidly through the ranks, she ended up with a top security clearance and eventually trained eight platoons at Kapooka. She remembers “you couldn’t really trust anybody because you knew if it got out, that’s the end of my career.” Yvonne’s sexuality was eventually exposed and she was subjected to interrogation. After this, her military career came to an end after ten years of service.



**JENNIFER JEFFERIES** (left) signed up to the WRAAC in 1979 and became a driver. She came to realise her sexuality shortly after joining. She believes rumours of her sexuality dogged her throughout her time in the military and ultimately she only served three years. Although she was not formally discharged, she believed knowledge of her sexuality “killed any chance of promotion, decent postings.”

**... she believed knowledge of her sexuality “killed any chance of promotion, decent postings.”** JENNIFER JEFFERIES

**DELIA QUIGLEY** joined the RAAF at 17 but left after completing her 3-year sign on period after a work colleague outed her to her Warrant Officer. She remembers “I begged him to let me leave quietly rather than report me to the Service Police.” The stress of having to constantly be vigilant was too high a price for many to pay.



Defence **LGBTI** Milestones

**Five members of the Gay Ex-Services Association are turned away from laying a wreath at Melbourne's Shrine of Remembrance.**

**ANZAC DAY  
1982**



# Surveillance and Scandal in the 1980s

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A scandal rocked the RAAF Academy in 1982 when one cadet attacked another who had tried to seduce him. The police investigation uncovered several men who had sexual relations with the cadet, including RICHARD GRATION – the son of an Army general who later became Chief of the Defence Force. The RAAF Police investigation followed the usual tactics of intimidating interviews, where Richard and others confessed. Authorities prepared to discharge the cadets, but Richard received legal advice from the head of Army Legal Services that the evidence may not be admissible because it was coerced. The Brigadier convinced the Defence Minister to set up a Court of Inquiry investigating the RAAF Police practices. The Court of Inquiry found that while the evidence was generally accurate, minor procedural errors collectively disadvantaged Richard and the other cadets. They were not discharged, and instead received written warnings.

CAPTION (ABOVE):  
After the RAAF Academy incident, RICHARD GRATION finished his training and served as a pilot. He left the RAAF in 1995, worked in the public service, and then completed a law degree and became a barrister. In 2013 he re-enlisted as an Air Force Reserve Lawyer.

CAPTION (BELOW RIGHT):  
*Melbourne Truth*, 26 December 1981, reported on the sacking of Shane Duniam and four other RAAF airmen.

CAPTION (BELOW):  
An article in *Melbourne Truth*, 13 February 1982, reported on the scandal at the RAAF Academy. Ultimately a Court of Inquiry recommended that the four cadets be retained.

IN LATE 1981, SHANE Duniam realised that he was under surveillance by RAAF Police at Point Cook. One night, as he passed the

not-so-inconspicuous police car parked outside his house, he pulled up next to them: “I just put my brakes on, wound down my window, ‘Hey fellas, I’m going to *Mandate* tonight, I’m probably home about 3:00 in the morning. You can have the night off.’” A few days later, Shane was summoned to an interview that lasted most of the day. Police questioned him about his sex life and about other men they were investigating. They also searched Shane’s house, where they uncovered letters from another airman in Canberra. Shane was one of five men discharged in December 1981, and he returned to Tasmania feeling “shell-shocked” and “shattered”.

## 5 SACKED IN CAMP PROBES

By SIMON HAMMOND

FIVE men have been discharged from the Royal Australian Air Force in the past month for homosexual activities.

Four other men have been severely reprimanded over homosexual incidents at three of Victoria’s RAAF bases.

Airmen claim a “witch hunt” on homosexual activities led to the dismissals.

A senior RAAF member was thrown out of the force after homosexual incidents with four younger members at the Laverton air base.

The commanding officer reprimanded the younger members.

Three men involved in a homosexual ring at Point Cook were discharged at their own request after being “caught in the act” by senior officers.

CONTINUED PAGE 2

## ROGER — AND OUT!

FROM PAGE 1

The fifth man discharged from the RAAF Stores Depot in Tottenham.

RAAF FR officer for the Melbourne area, Reserve

Squadron Leader Ken

Llewellyn said the incidents were all discovered in the last

month.

“We have not been involved in a ‘witch hunt’ of homosexuals,” it is purely

coincidental that there has been a spate of incidents,”

Mr Llewellyn said.

“It seems that once we catch one ring of homosexuals, other similar

years time this attitude may change.”

The discharge of the man has created shock waves throughout Australia’s gay community.

A spokesman for the homosexual Christian Community Church, Pastor John Willis, said it was “blatant discrimination”.

He said the case should be taken before the Equal Opportunities Board.

# ‘GAY’ FLIERS FACE THE AXE

FOUR RAAF officer cadets are expected to be kicked out over alleged homosexual activities. The four men have been suspended following a huge investigation into homosexual incidents involving cadets at Victoria’s Point Cook air base.

The Air Force has confirmed it is investigating the men aged between 18 and 21. It is the second time in less than two months a homosexual scandal has rocked the Air Force.

### Complaints

In December five men were discharged and four were severely reprimanded.

Cook received complaints of gay incidents.

“After thorough investigations we are questioning four cadets in particular,” Mr Doak said.

“Their personal files are being held by senior RAAF officers in Canberra and they look likely to be discharged over the incidents.”

Sources this week said the same ‘witch hunt’ was responsible for the latest discoveries.

In December the nine airmen involved came from Point Cook, Laverton and Tottenham air bases.

At Laverton, a senior RAAF officer was thrown out for his involvement with four younger base members.

to again shock Australia’s gay community

A spokesman for the homosexual Christian Community Church, Pastor John Willis, said the investigations were further “blatant discrimination” against gays.

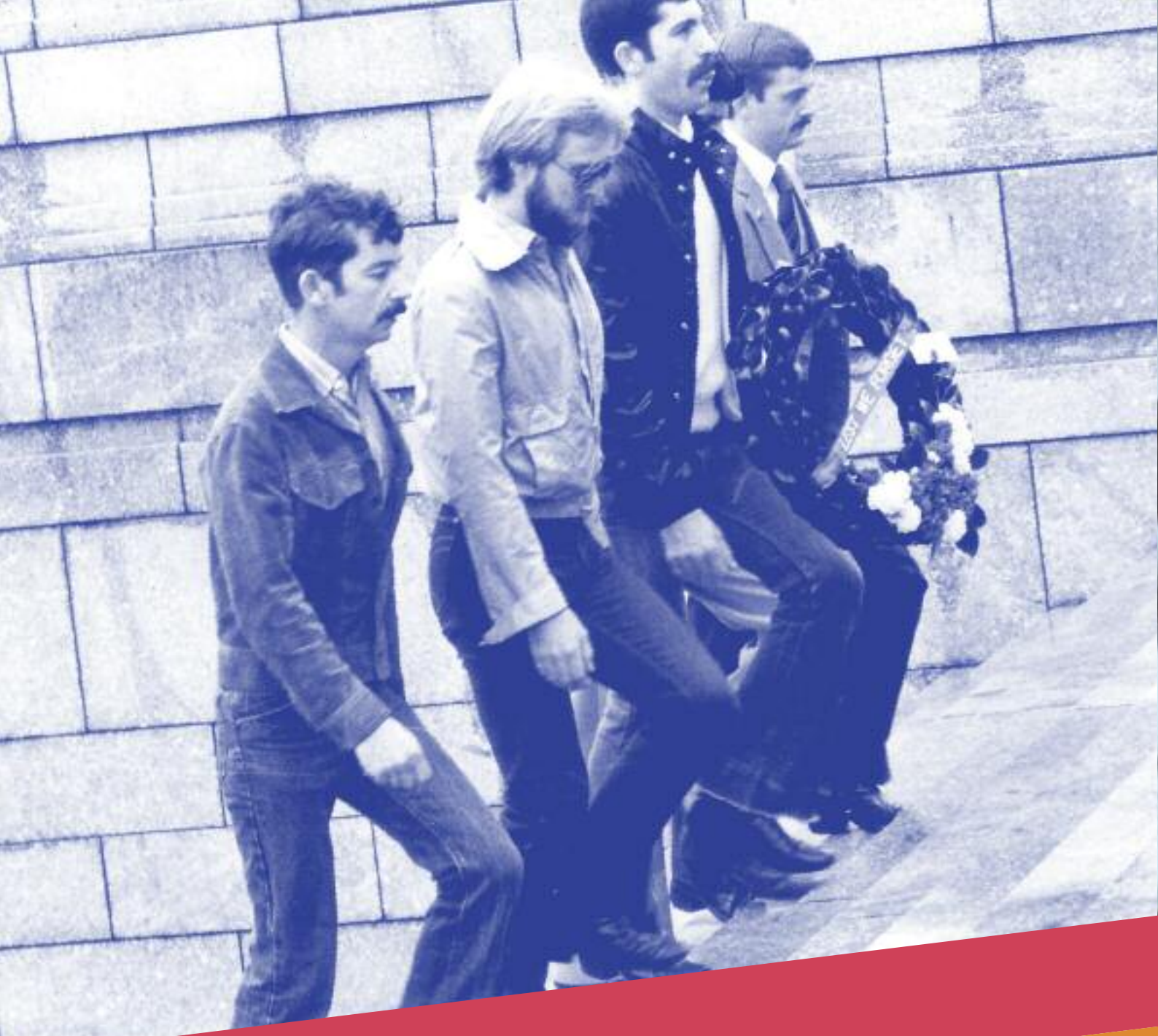
He said the airmen involved should appeal to the Equal Opportunities Board over the discrimination.



**A Court of Inquiry investigates police practices relating to homosexuality at the RAAF Academy. The Court of Inquiry recommends not discharging four cadets because police evidence may be considered inadmissible.**

**APRIL  
1982**





# Lest We Forget: Remembering Fallen Mates

ON ANZAC DAY 1982, A SMALL GROUP OF ex-servicemen approached the Shrine of Remembrance in Melbourne to lay a wreath in memory of the mates they had served with. Bruce Ruxton, then Victorian state president of the Returned Services League, intercepted them. There is 'no way you can lay a wreath' he declared, summoning a nearby police officer to escort the men away.

The problem was that these soldiers were members of the Gay Ex-Services Association and 'poofers' were not the sort of people that Ruxton wanted to see included in a day of remembrance that was starting to take on a sacred aura.

He went further, telling the *Weekend Australian* the next day that 'I don't know where all these queers and poofers have come from. I don't remember a single poofter from World War Two'. Buzz Kennedy, a columnist for the same paper surveyed his mates from the 2/32, 2/28 and 2/43 Battalions and reported that they had all agreed: 'ours was an entirely heterosexual mob', Kennedy declared. He went on snidely to question the gay veterans' credentials: 'With the visual evidence of the size of the gay community in 1982, the question has to be: where were they then?'

Almost immediately, others wrote to the papers to correct the memories of these two old war-horses. A doctor reported that 'while the recorded number was small, they did in fact exist'. Another noted that the batman (personal attendant) to no fewer than three of the most famous Allied generals was 'one of the gayest fellas I have ever met; "gay as a Christmas tree" in fact'. A third declared that there had been 'quite a few [who] were tolerated as long as they took no for an answer'.

## THE GAY EX-SERVICES ASSOCIATION

*GESA, the Gay Ex-Services Association, was founded by a group of five men who knew each other because they worked or partied at Mandate, a gay bar in St Kilda. As they got to know each other, they inevitably shared their stories, discovering that all but one of them had been in the Air Force and all but one of them had been kicked out as a result of anti-gay policies. Maybe, they decided, it was time to 'get a little bit political'.*

*A group was formed, a name was dreamed up, badges made and they decided to lay a wreath on Anzac Day in 1982 during that part of the day when members of the public were invited to participate. As they climbed the steps to the Shrine, they were turned away by police, under the direction of Bruce Ruxton.*



### CAPTION:

In 2015, DEFGILIS began the annual tradition of laying rainbow wreaths on Anzac Day in Melbourne, Sydney, Canberra, Townsville and Brisbane. At Melbourne's Shrine of Remembrance, Max Campbell, surviving member of GESA, had the honour of laying the wreath flanked by currently serving LGBTI members.

**SERVING IN  
SILENCE?**  
Australian LGBTI Military  
Service since World War II





Defence **LGBTI** Milestones

**Defence Instruction  
DI(G)Pers 15-3 updates the ban  
on gay and lesbian service.**

**NOVEMBER  
1985**



Defence **LGBTI** Milestones

**An article in *Outrage* causes a stir when it names three RAAF Police who had been going undercover to catch gays and lesbians.**

**APRIL  
1991**



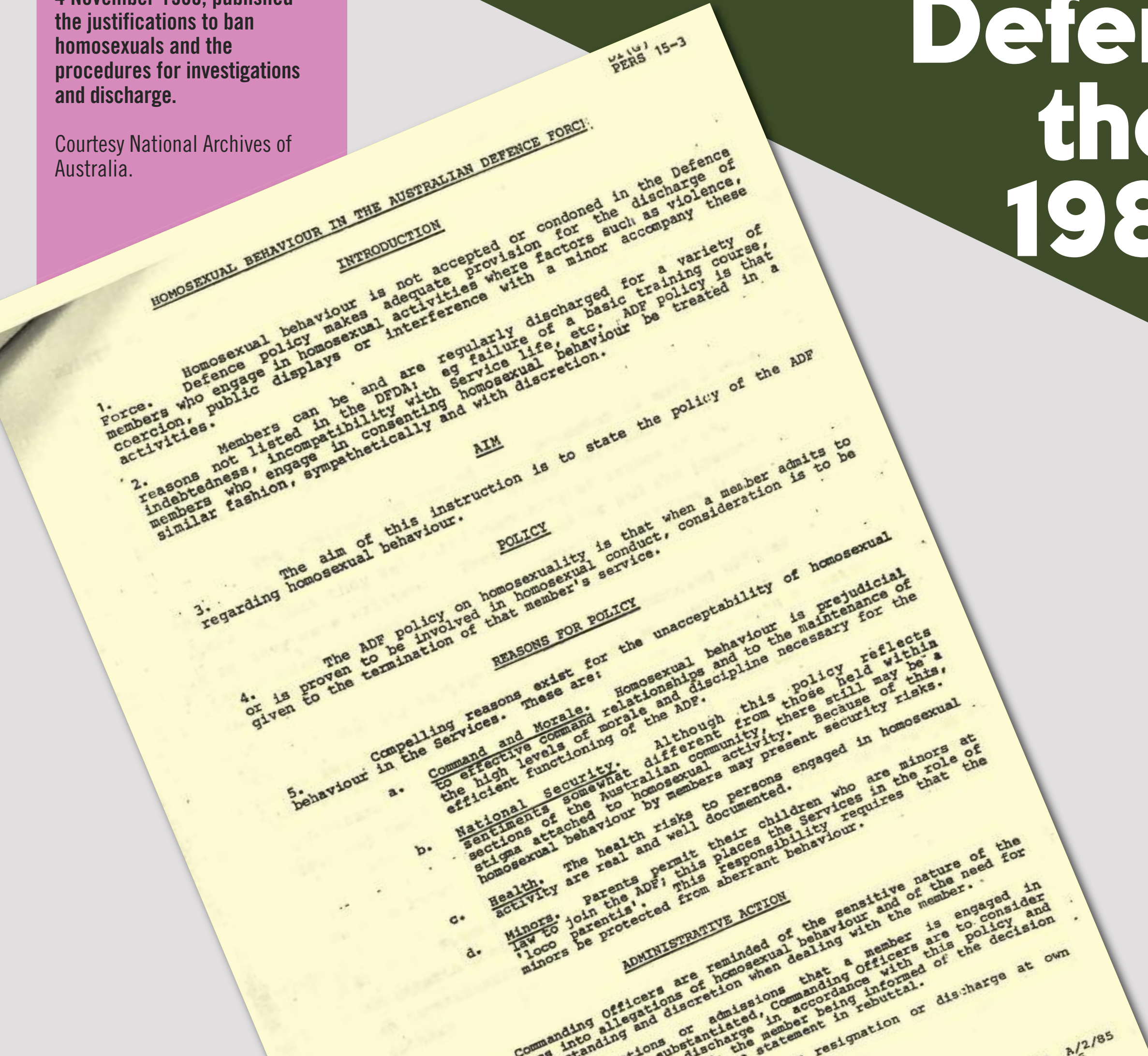
AS LATE AS 1985 THE ADF RENEWED ITS BAN ON GAY and lesbian service in DI(G)PERS 15-3. It listed four justifications: 1. Homosexuals would threaten troop morale and therefore operational readiness; 2. They were national security threats because they could be subjected to blackmail; 3. Health risks (which was an allusion to HIV/AIDS); 4. To protect minors who were serving in the ADF.

Critics would point to the lack of logic behind these reasons. If there were no ban, then gays and lesbians would not be at risk of blackmail. The health and minors arguments played on false stereotypes about gay men as sexual predators and all having HIV/AIDS. A 1988 *Melbourne Star Observer* article argued, “Obviously, somebody forgot to tell the policy makers that all the drama described above is not caused by homosexuality itself, but by the irrational homophobic reactions of straight (‘normal’) people which the defence ‘thinkers’ evidently desire to enshrine for the maintenance of the fragile military (and male?) ego.” There were few options to challenge the ban, though. The Defence Force Ombudsman could not compel the ADF to lift the ban, but rather could only ensure that proper investigation procedures were followed. In 1989 the Ombudsman wrote: “In general I have few problems with the ADF’s stated policy, although I believe much of the statement is conjectural rather than evidential.”

# Defending the Ban 1985-92

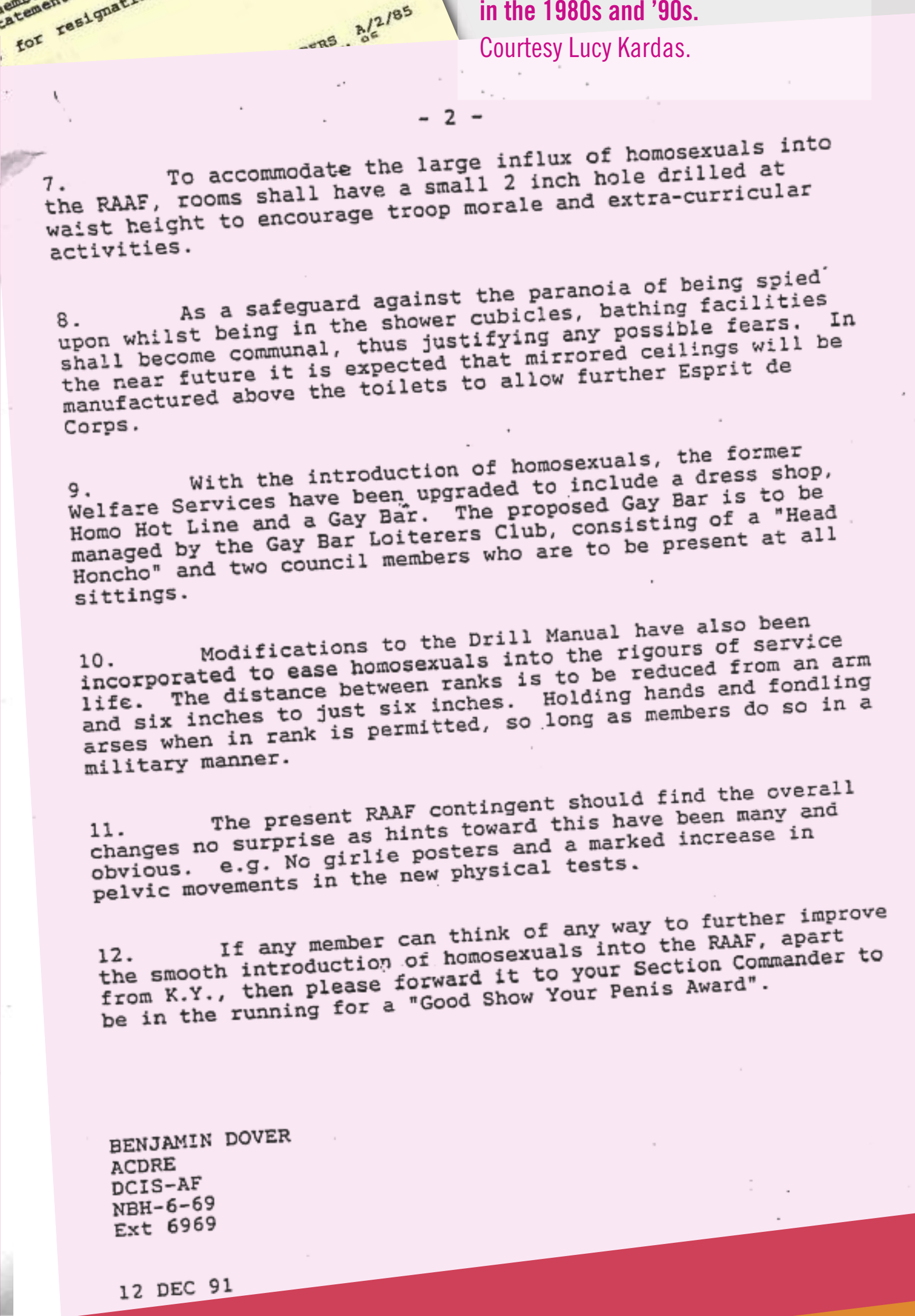
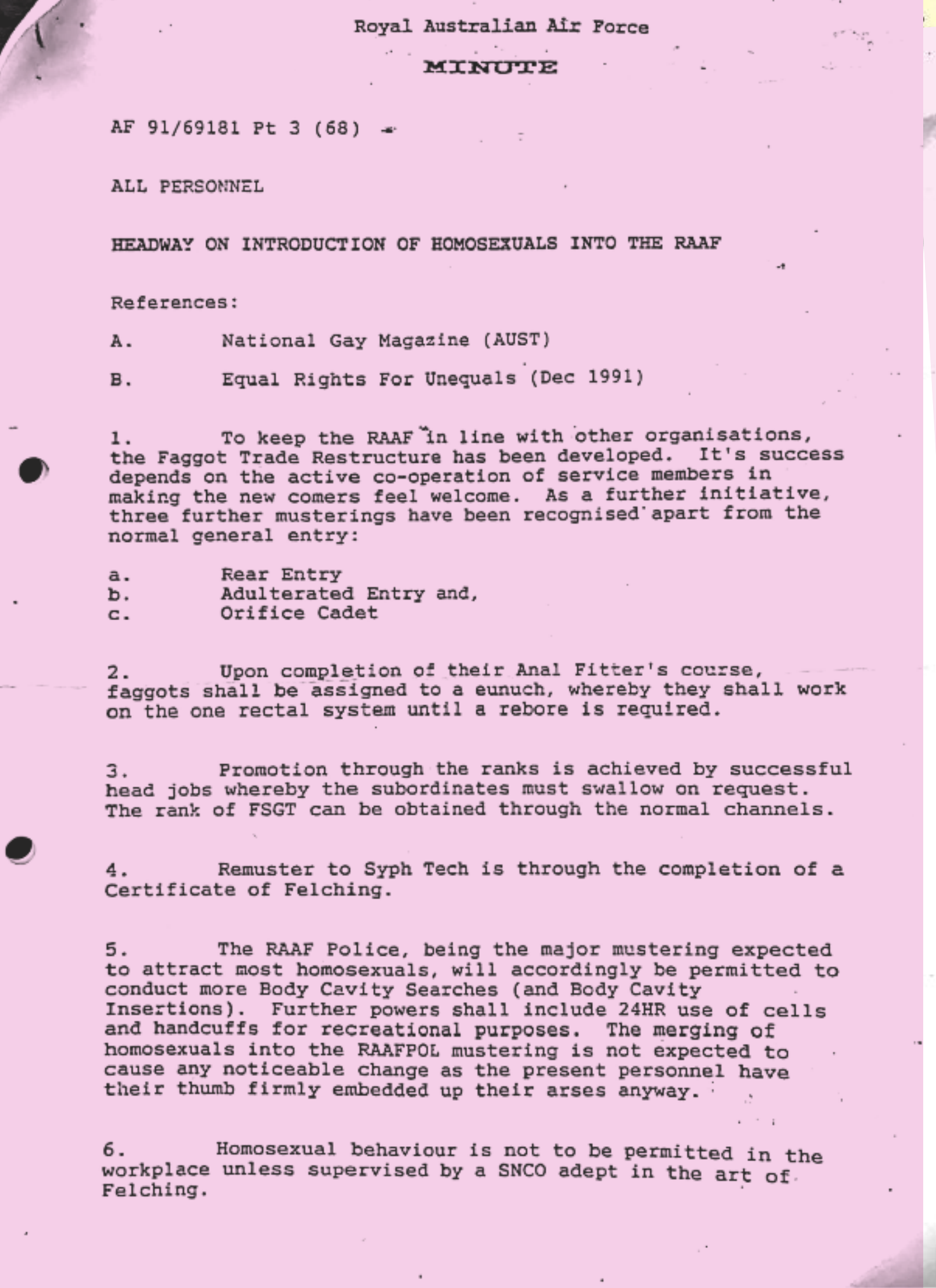
CAPTION (BELOW):  
Defence Instruction (General) PERS 15-3, dated 4 November 1985, published the justifications to ban homosexuals and the procedures for investigations and discharge.

Courtesy National Archives of Australia.



**SERVING IN SILENCE?**  
Australian **LGBTI** Military Service since World War II

This fake memo was left on a RAAF airwoman's desk in 1992, while politicians were debating the ban. The document, probably written by a policeman who knew quite a bit (or too much) about gay lifestyles, is indicative of the homophobic attitudes of many service members in the 1980s and '90s.  
Courtesy Lucy Kardas.





**A lesbian dismissed under the ban files a complaint with the Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission. The HREOC enters discussions with the ADF about her case and the ban more widely, but the ADF resists lifting the ban.**

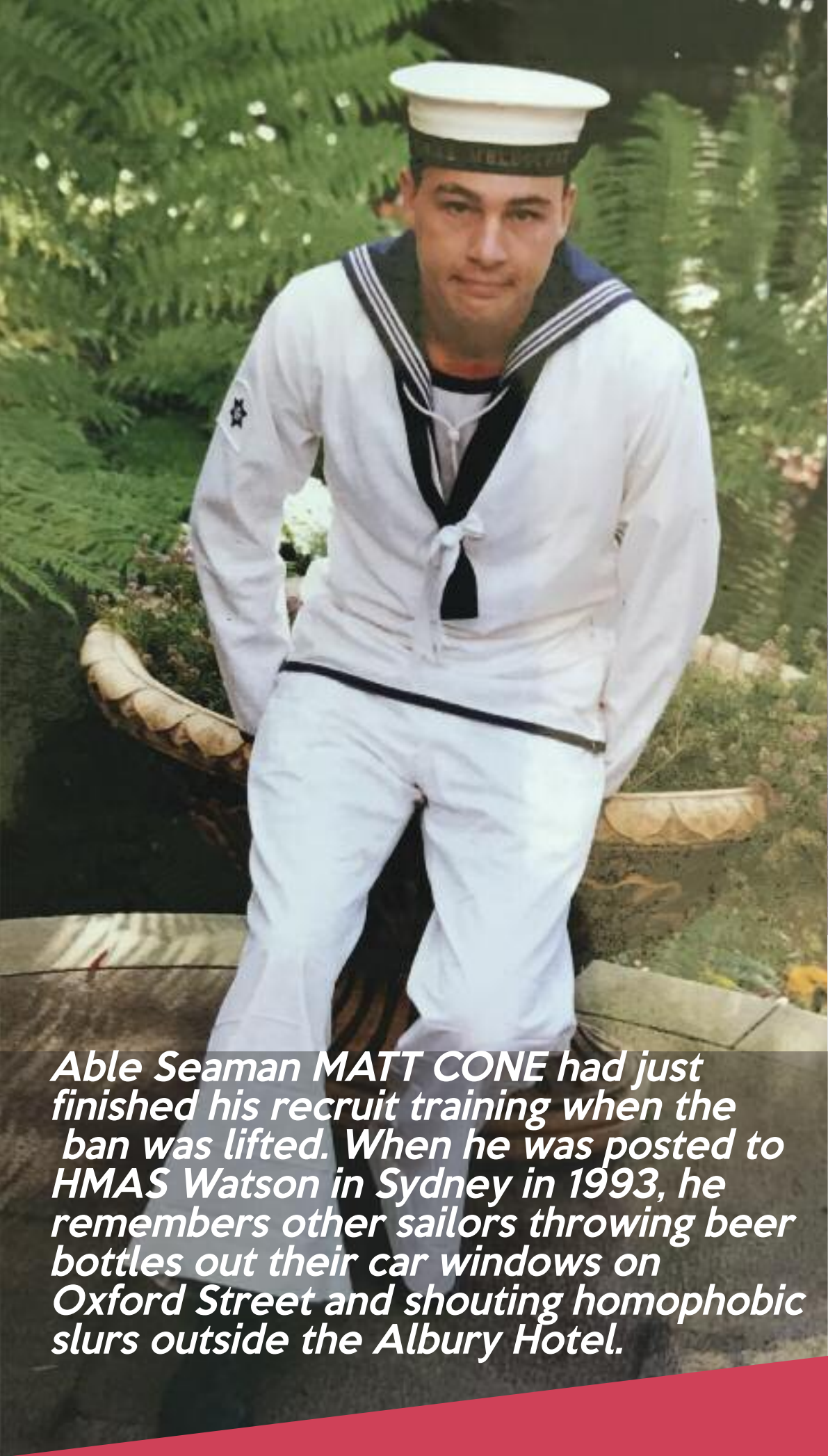
**1990-92**



**After Defence Minister, Senator Robert Ray, and Attorney-General Michael Duffy present their cases, the Keating Cabinet decides to lift the ban on gay, lesbian and bisexual military service. This does not include transgender service.**

**23 NOVEMBER  
1992**



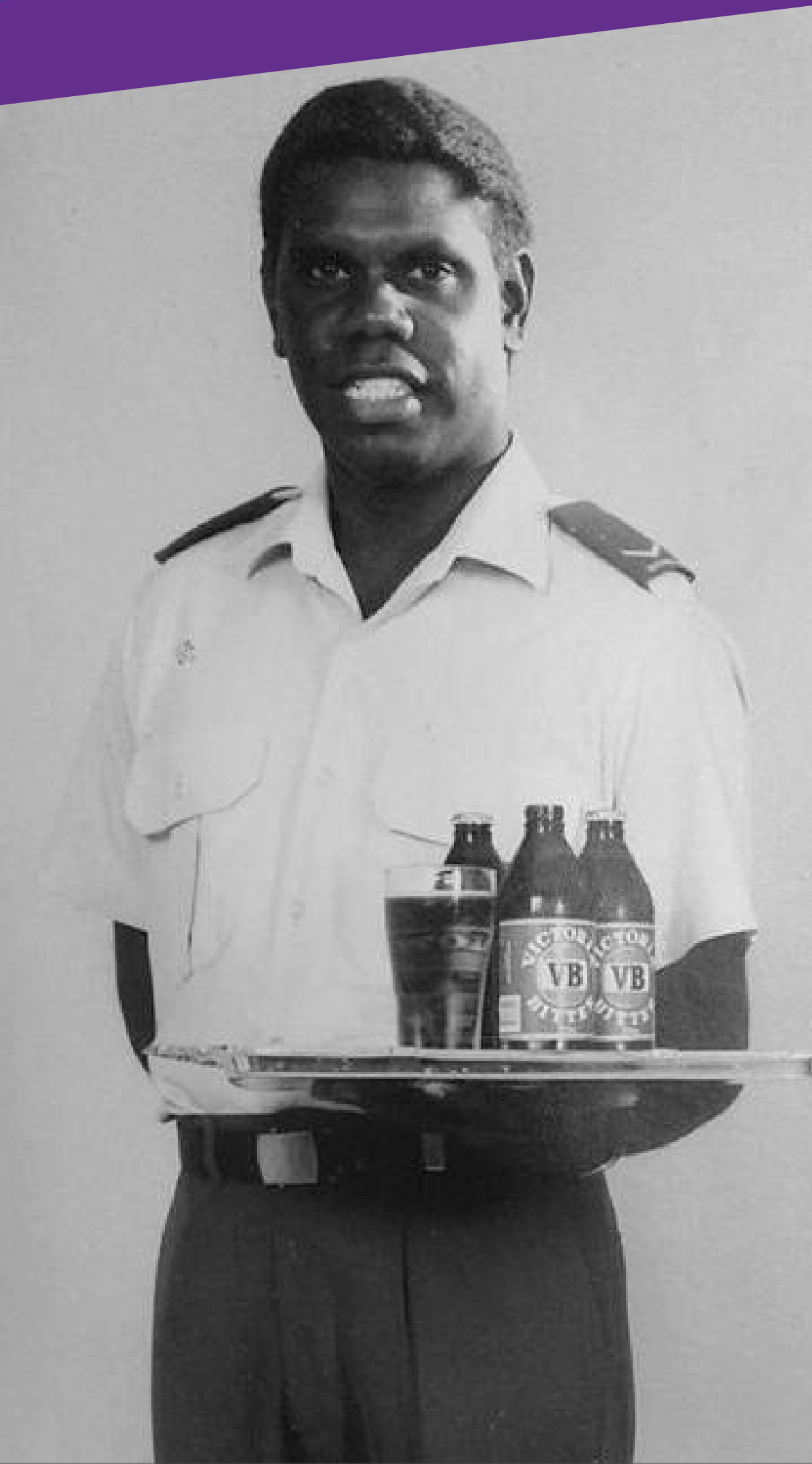


Able Seaman MATT CONE had just finished his recruit training when the ban was lifted. When he was posted to HMAS Watson in Sydney in 1993, he remembers other sailors throwing beer bottles out their car windows on Oxford Street and shouting homophobic slurs outside the Albury Hotel.



RAAF Corporal CRAIG CAHILL (right) was in Learmonth when the ban was lifted. He remembers: "The discussion going around was such things as – the world's going to end, we don't want those faggots in here, etc. Came the next day and everything was fine, so it was a huge lot of fear and rubbish about nothing."

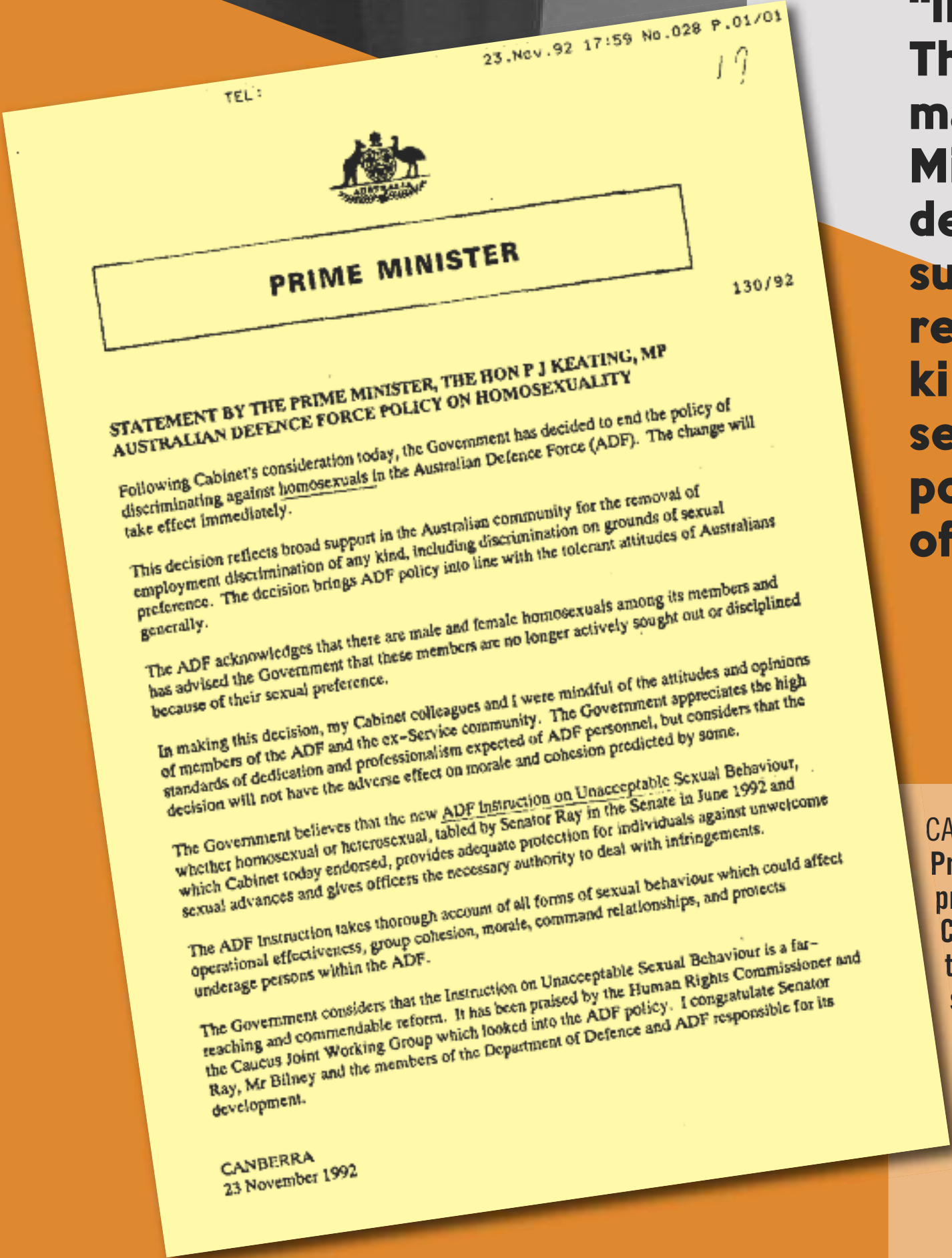
# Lifting the Ban



Leading Aircraftman ED BAILEY remembers when the ban was lifted: "I think people were still very much guarded and still very much in the closet. I don't think it's one of those openly gay things where you suddenly see people change in their mannerisms and openly discuss their sexualities in front of other people."

**IN 1990, A DISMISSED LESBIAN servicewoman lodged a complaint against the ADF in the Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission (HREOC). The HREOC entered into negotiations with the ADF over this particular case and in the hopes of convincing the ADF to repeal the ban. In June 1992, though, the Defence Minister, Senator Robert Ray, announced that the ban would remain. The HREOC then turned to Attorney-General Michael Duffy, arguing that the ban contravened Australia's obligations under the International Labour Organization and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Fearing a split in the ALP, Prime Minister Paul Keating assigned backbencher Senator Terry Aulich to chair a Caucus Joint Working Group on Homosexual Policy in the Australian Defence Force. They interviewed gay rights advocates and service chiefs, examined the arguments about international law, and recommended, in a 4-2 split, lifting the ban.**

The ban finally went on the Cabinet agenda on 23 November. Duffy argued the international law case to lift the ban, while Ray argued that the military was exempt because of the "inherent requirements of the job". The majority of Cabinet sided with Duffy, making the decision to lift the ban. Prime Minister Paul Keating put out a press release declaring: "This decision reflects broad support in the Australian community for the removal of employment discrimination of any kind, including discrimination on grounds of sexual preference. The decision brings ADF policy into line with the tolerant attitudes of Australians generally."



CAPTION: Prime Minister Paul Keating's press release following the Cabinet decision to repeal the ban on gay and lesbian service.

Courtesy National Archives of Australia.

**SERVING IN SILENCE?**  
Australian **LGBTI** Military Service since World War II



**G-Force forms as a support, advocacy and social group for serving gays, lesbians and bisexuals. The group would last until 1998.**

**JUNE  
1994**



Defence **LGBTI** Milestones

**Notwithstanding opposition within the ADF hierarchy, G-Force marches in the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras.**

**MARCH  
1996**



# ADF FLOAT GO-AHEAD

Continued from page 1

with the rest of the gay and lesbian community.

But Vice Admiral Walls, a Defence Force Vice Chief, wrote back in October declining his request. "Entry in the parade would give the impression that the ADF promotes a homosexual lifestyle, while in fact it neither promotes nor opposes a homosexual or a heterosexual lifestyle," he wrote.

"The advocacy or public display of a particular sexual preference is not in accordance with the ADF's policy of non-promotion."

The day after Mitchell received the letter Brigadier D'Hage telephoned him to arrange a meeting with himself and G-Force Vice President, Stuie Watson, in Sydney. Mitchell and Watson, however, said they told him they believed the ADF was unable to

(Openly gay men and lesbians have been allowed to serve in the ADF since a change in federal government policy on 23 November 1992.)

"He [D'Hage] agreed that the forces didn't have a leg to stand on," Watson told *Capital Q*. "Certainly the chiefs above him were probably hoping that this sort of thing wouldn't happen so soon after the change in policy."

D'Hage, who Mitchell describes as a "very intelligent and reasonable man", then approved the float which on the back is likely to carry the words "Supporting Gay Defence Force Members - Past and Present".

D'Hage's Chief of Staff, Amanda Foreman, said there had been no resistance among ADF chiefs to the proposal as long as the float was "low key". She confirmed the plan had been endorsed by General Baker in mid December. **Q**

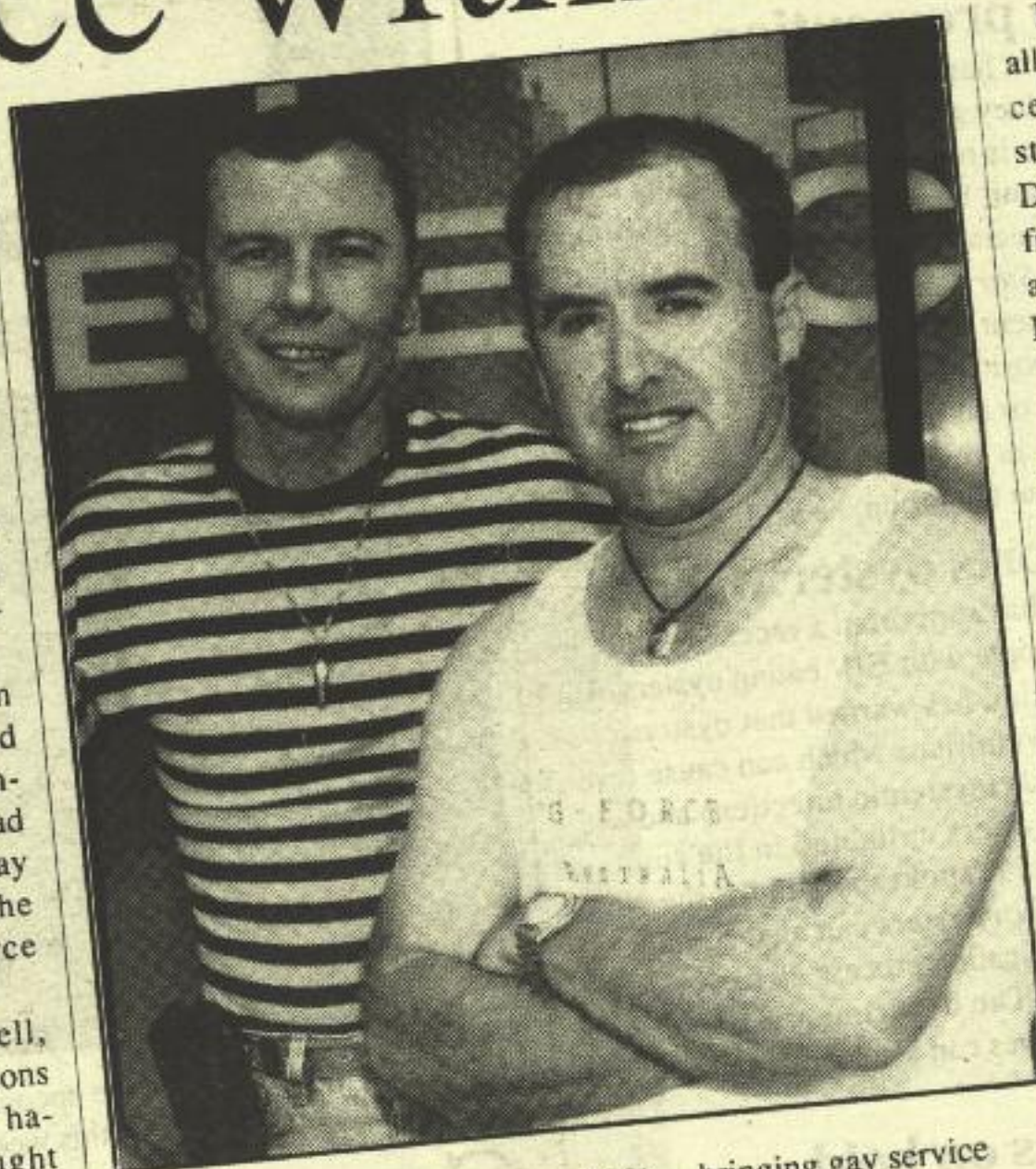
by Peter O'Shea

Recently another serviceman was posted to work with David Mitchell who, for reference, had placed a Gay and Lesbian Counselling Service magnet on his office white board.

When Mitchell came into his office he would frequently find the magnet on the floor or out of sight. When Mitchell walked into the office, the other guy would walk out.

"After a while I asked him what the hell he was doing and he said 'Well I find it offensive'," says Mitchell, who had set up a support group for gay and lesbian personnel in the Australian Defence Force (ADF) just months before.

The irony is that Mitchell, an Air Force Communications Officer, was also an ADF harassment officer. "I thought 'How can someone be harassing a harassment officer?' So I went to the senior harassment officer who basically told me 'I'll hit his head in'."



Mitchell (right) and Watson (left)... bringing gay service personnel to the fore. Photo: Jeff Hudson

"Even though you have the... lesbian counselling

the prejudice he has sought to counter. Dozens of unsigned cryptic

Mitchell has dismissed all with little afterthought. "It was a strip with a character Dave who was r... from someone and a cliff. The caption Dave survive tomo...

"That rattled me. Mitchell's colleague group's Vice-President Watson, has had experiences of harassment none so personal. After Mardi...

he says: "One of my unit had called staff member whether I had off because I had commented that homosexuals area."

Watson, 30, has been in the ADF since 1974. He became involved after running who he had time, in the called Dave was going... Best life...

## G-Force

**IN 1994, RAAF FLIGHT SERGEANT DAVID MITCHELL had a challenging coming out experience, finding himself isolated and suffering significant mental health problems. He managed to pull through the situation and, fortunately, found a generally supportive working environment where the little homophobia he encountered was usually quashed quickly by those in higher ranks.**

What he discovered as he was coming out was that lots of his comrades were less keen to follow his lead. Over and above the official policies tolerating gay, lesbian and bisexual service, there was still a lot of fear. Some gays and lesbians told Mitchell that they feared getting 'their head smashed in'. What Defence needed, he decided, was an 'organised presence', a club that could take up the issues, but also provide a place to meet, relax and talk. And so, in 1994 G-Force was born. The group held regular meetings, published a newsletter and talked comfortably with the forces' newspapers.

*By 1996, they were ready to hit the streets in Mardi Gras. There were rules about what personnel could do in their uniforms, so they marched in civvies. And the crowd loved it.*

THE FIRST TIME THAT DEFENCE PERSONNEL MARCHED in Mardi Gras was in 1996 in a contingent organised by David Mitchell and G-Force. Mitchell approached the ADF leadership in mid-1995 about having a G-Force float. In November 1995 he received word that the ADF opposed the float, and a senior officer even threatened Mitchell's career if he went ahead with it. However, G-Force persisted because they knew that the ADF could not stop them so long as they did not march in uniform. In January 1996 the ADF changed its position to permit a 'non-military-looking' float, and in March 1996 between 10 and 20 members of G-Force marched in Mardi Gras.

CAPTION:  
One of only two known photos of the G-Force float at the 1996 Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras.



**SERVING IN SILENCE?**  
Australian **LGBTI** Military Service since World War II



Group Captain  
MIKE SEAH was  
one member who  
unsuccessfully applied  
for recognition of his  
de facto partner,  
appealing all the way  
to the Chief of the  
Defence Force.

PEST  
Revised 1.1.90

**STAFF IN CONFIDENCE**  
Department of Defence  
**STANDARD APPLICATION**

• Use when applications cannot be finalised at unit level • Attach appropriate annexes and enclosures  
• Complete in triplicate • Tick appropriate boxes

**PART A - Applicant to Complete**

Type of Application

APPLICATION FOR RECOGNITION OF A PERSON AS FAMILY

Rank: FLTLT Surname: SEAH Initials: M T U Number: O 513496 Category or Mustering: MED  
Date of Birth: 23 MAR 69 Current Unit: 306ABW Arrival Date at Current Unit: 23 JAN 95 Arrival Date at Current Locality: 18 APR 90  
Altimen: Officers: PA: SSA: ☒ Single: ☐ Widowed: ☐ Separated: ☐  
Date Enlisted: Current Engagement Expires: Date Appointed: 01 DEC 92 Date Enlisted: 18 APR 90 Married: ☐ Divorced: ☐ De Facto: ☐

Reason for Application: REQUEST RECOGNITION OF MY SAME SEX DEFACTO PARTNER AS A FAMILY MEMBER. I HAVE APPLIED FOR RECOGNITION AS SPOUSE, WHICH HAS BEEN REJECTED FOLLOWING REDRESS UP TO CDF. I CITE THE REASONS FOR RECOGNISED DEFACTO COUPLE ARE INTERDEPENDENT. WE SATISFY ALL THE CRITERIA OF COUPLE OR RECOGNISED DEFACTO COUPLE NOT BEING OF THE OPPOSITE SEX. MY PARTNER DOES EARN AN INCOME, BUT THIS SHOULD NOT BE A CONTRAINDICATION TO HIM BEING RECOGNISED AS A FAMILY MEMBER. WE ARE PURCHASING A HOME TOGETHER, HAVE A JOINT BANK ACCOUNT, SHARE THE COSTS OF LIVING AND HAVE BEEN TOGETHER FOR OVER THREE YEARS NOW. MY PARTNER IS ONE OF THE MAIN BENEFICIARIES IN MY WILL. FOR ALL INTENSIVE PURPOSES, WE ARE A DOUBLE INCOME, NO CHILDREN FAMILY.

UNDER CURRENT LEGISLATION, I CANNOT HAVE MY PARTNER RECOGNISED AS A SPOUSE. THE CURRENT SYSTEM IS DISCRIMINATORY IN NOT RECOGNISING SAME SEX DEFACTO PARTNERS, BUT UNTIL THE INDIVIDUAL IS CHANGED, THIS IS THE ONLY ALTERNATIVE. HAVING HIM RECOGNISED AS A FAMILY MEMBER WOULD BE A REASONABLE COMPROMISE, GIVING ME CATEGORY 'M' STATUS. I APPRECIATE THAT THIS RECOGNITION IS PURELY FOR THE PURPOSES OF SERVICE ADMINISTRATION, AND DOES NOT NECESSARILY GIVE MY PARTNER ANY LEGAL STANDING IN THE CIVILIAN WORLD.

I INTEND TO CONTINUE MY CAREER AS A RAAF MEDICAL OFFICER, AND SHOULD I STILL BE CONSIDERED A CATEGORY 'O' MEMBER, I STAND TO LOSE OUT SIGNIFICANTLY FOR REMOVAL, LEAVE AND RELATED ENTITLEMENTS. I EXPECT TO BE POSTED AT THE END OF 1998.

I have checked my PREs for accuracy. A new form ☒ PERP ☐ PREF ☐ has ☒ has not been submitted

Michael Seah (Applicant's Signature) 18 AUG 97 (Date)

**PART B - Section Commander's Comments and Recommendation (To be attached)**

• The Section Commander's comments are to briefly include relevant details of Defence Instructions on which the applicant has been counselled, particularly those with financial implications, eg DFRDB, long service leave and removal entitlements.

Michael Seah (Signature) NIL (Printed Name) 25 AUG 97 (Rank or Appointment) 25 AUG 97 (Date)

Stock No 7530-86-055-4553

**STAFF IN CONFIDENCE**

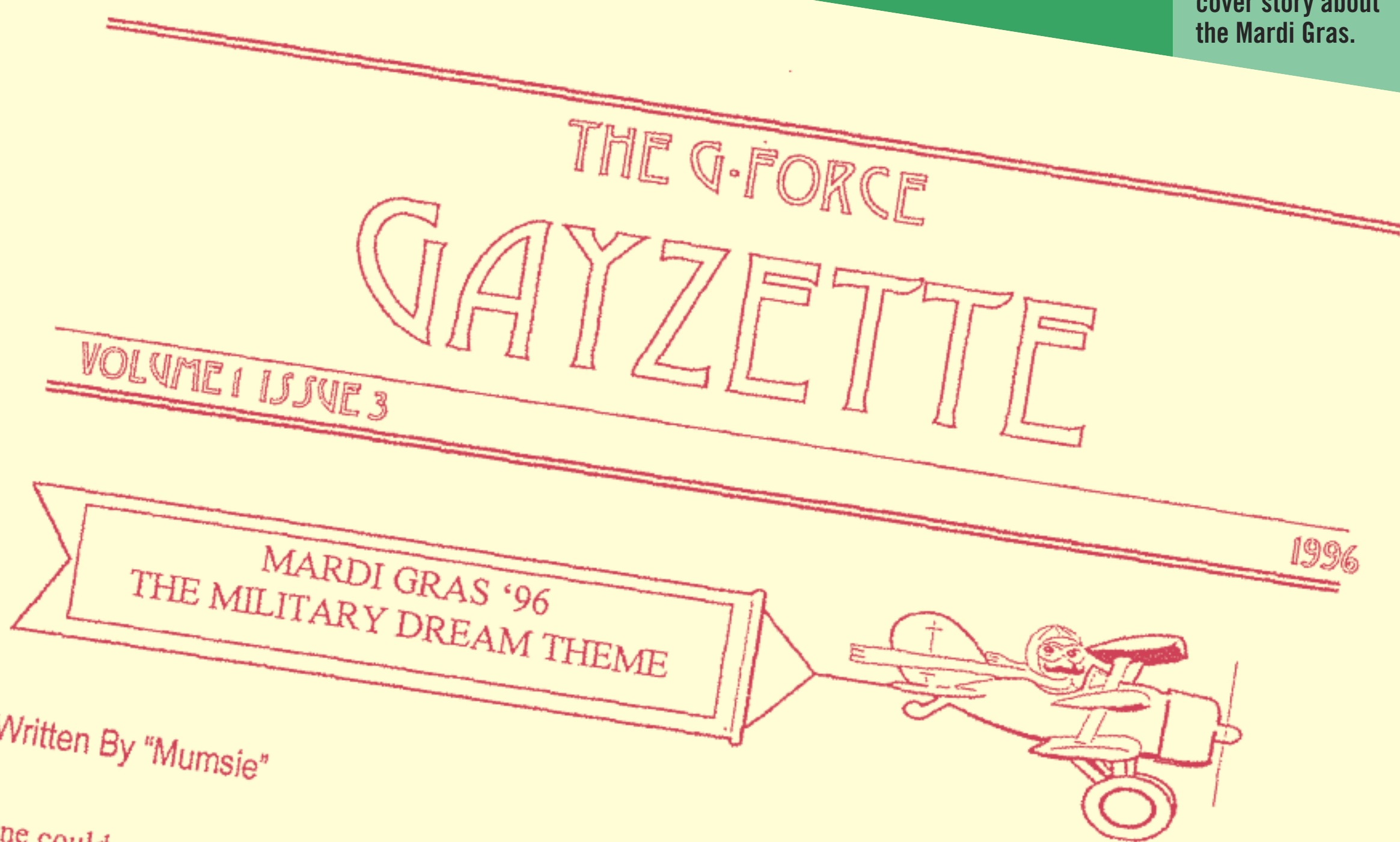
**SERVING IN  
SILENCE?**  
Australian **LGBTI** Military  
Service since World War II

# G-Force vs Discrimination

ONE FOCUS OF G-FORCE'S ACTIVISM WAS FIGHTING FOR recognition of same-sex de facto partners. As early as 1993 the Army rejected a lesbian couple's application to have their relationship recognised because the policy on de facto relationships explicitly defined them as members of the opposite sex. Same-sex couples therefore could not access benefits such as financial assistance during base transfers, travel allowances, married quarters, compassionate leave, education programs and even pensions. Despite G-Force's lobbying, the ADF steadfastly refused to change its policy. Chief of the Defence Force, General John Baker, wrote in one letter: "While you argue that the common [social] standard requires that the discrimination you complain of should be removed, I do not believe that common standards make such a demand." The only entitlements G-Force successfully secured were access to Defence Health, base entry rights and the right to be notified as next-of-kin in case of death. In late 2005, though, the ADF unexpectedly released a new policy on de facto recognition that was gender neutral, thus including same-sex partners.

It would not be until 2009, under a wider set of reforms by the Rudd Government, that the Department of Veterans' Affairs would also recognise same-sex partners.

CAPTION:  
G-Force newsletter  
the *Gayzette*, 1996,  
cover story about  
the Mardi Gras.



One could not but admire the heavily structured and choreographed Gym aerobic display of the two ostensibly military groups of yet more marching boys (no girls?). That they should have been selected, for massive impact as a finale for the 96 Mardi Gras parade is hardly surprising - sort of WOW!!.

It was also hardly surprising that Mr Marr (A.B.C. Commentator - who, one may assume, in some remote fashion may be - well, family!) - should have been so mesmerised that he managed to become confused by the display of it all - with the more telling heart of G-Force preceding it.

Precede it! ? - Good grief! - the and subsequent



Defence **LGBTI** Milestones

**DI(G)PERS 16-16 formally bans transgender service, saying anyone who wishes to transition must leave the ADF.**

**20 APRIL  
2000**





*Flying Officer DANA PHAM is one of the first transgender members to join the ADF after the repeal of DI(G)PERS 16-16. She ran into significant obstacles with Defence Force Recruiting, but successfully enlisted in 2014 and now serves as an officer at RAAF Base Fairbairn in Canberra.*



*Leading Aircraftman JESSE KANE, serves as a RAAF photographer.*

# Transgender and Intersex Policies

**SERVING IN SILENCE?**  
Australian **LGBTI** Military Service since World War II

**BEFORE 2000 THERE WAS NO SPECIFIC policy on transgender service, though it was considered unacceptable under rules such as “conduct to the prejudice of good order”. Studies from the US have shown that pre-transition MtF people often join militaries as a place where they can “prove” their masculinity to themselves. They often put themselves in dangerous situations, preferring to die in combat rather than live with gender dysphoria. Pre-transition FtM people often find the military a place where they can safely exhibit “masculine” behaviours.**

**CAPTION:**  
**ALEX POLLOCK**  
Courtesy Catherine Heal



**In the year 2000, after hearing news of a British pilot allowed to transition, the ADF adopted DI(G)PERS 16-16, the first policy explicitly banning transgender service. The summative statement said: “a person undergoing or contemplating gender reassignment cannot be considered suitable for service in the ADF because of the need for ongoing treatment and/or the presence of a psychiatric disorder.” Transgender people thus had to serve in secret or face dismissal. It would not be until 2010, after two transgender members challenged the policy, that the ADF repealed DI(G)PERS 16-16, permitting transgender people to serve and transition.**

**There has never been a policy on intersex service, and intersex variations have been treated as a medical condition. Some intersex variations have been allowed, while others have precluded people from serving on medical grounds. Intersex people required to medically discharge were often viewed as “innocents”, unlike homosexuals or transgender people whose “behaviour” led to their discharges.**

*ALEX POLLOCK served in the RAAF in the 1960s and 70s as Wing Commander Neil Pollock (front row, second from left), a navigator flying test flights on the F-111s. Alex quietly discharged from the RAAF around the year 1980 to transition. She passed away in June 2005.*

Photo of F-111 crew  
Courtesy Noel Ryan.





**The partner of a deceased Second World War veteran lodges a complaint to the UN Human Rights Committee when he was denied a spousal pension. The UN finds in the complainant's favour, but the Howard Government refuses to recognise same-sex couples for veterans' pensions.**

**2002**





BRIDGET CLINCH  
in 2016 with her  
service medals.

Courtesy  
Bridget Clinch

**BRIDGET CLINCH** joined the Australian Army Reserve in 1997 straight after high school and enlisted full-time in 1999. She was a decorated infantry captain who served two tours to East Timor. In early 2009, she was diagnosed with gender dysphoria and announced her intention to transition. In doing so, she challenged ADF policy that had effectively banned transgender service. The ADF attempted to discharge Bridget in line with DI(G)PERS 16-16, however she appealed within the ADF and to the Human Rights Commission. After a conciliation process, the ADF withdrew her termination and repealed DI(G)PERS 16-16 in September 2010, thus permitting transgender people to serve and transition. The process of working for reform took a personal toll, and Bridget left the Army in 2013.

**SERVING IN  
SILENCE?**  
Australian **LGBTI** Military  
Service since World War II

**AMY HAMBLIN** enlisted in the RAAF in 2001, working in logistics transporting aircraft and other equipment, and even doing a four month tour in Iraq in 2006. Amy did not come out voluntarily, but rather in 2009 a mate caught her in a nightgown in her private residence and reported her. Amy recalls confessing, “Yes, Sir, after hours I live as a woman.” She subsequently challenged DI(G)PERS 16-16 through the RAAF chain of command and even prepared a potential legal case. She never needed to lodge that case, though, as the transgender ban was lifted in 2010. Amy continued to serve until 2014 and then, tired of the institutional discrimination she faced, became a reservist. She continued in that role until November 2017.

**AMY HAMBLIN** transitioned in 2010 and also contributed to the first *Air Force Diversity Handbook: Transitioning Gender in the Air Force* in 2013. Based on consultation with Amy and other transgender members, the guide provides advice that transgender members can apply to their personal transition journeys.

Courtesy Amy Hamblin





**DEFGLIS is founded as a support and advocacy group for gay, lesbian and bisexual Defence members. In 2011 they would change their name to the Defence LGBTI Information Service.**

**2002**



Defence **LGBTI** Milestones

**New ADF rules on de facto spouses recognise same-sex couples.**

**DECEMBER  
2005**



Defence **LGBTI** Milestones

**Department of Veterans'  
Affairs begins to recognise  
same-sex de facto couples.**

**JULY  
2009**



CAPTION:  
The 2016 DEFGLIS  
rainbow wreath-  
laying on Anzac  
Day at the  
Australian War  
Memorial.  
Pictured  
(left to right):  
Navy Lieutenant-  
Commander  
Linda Morris,  
Army Major and  
DEFGLIS Vice  
President Donna  
Harding, former  
RAAF Leading  
Aircraftman  
Ed Bailey, RAAF  
Wing Commander  
and DEFGLIS  
President  
Vince Chong.

# DEFGLIS

**SERVING IN  
SILENCE?**  
Australian **LGBTI** Military  
Service since World War II

**IN 2002, THEN-PETTY OFFICER STUART O'BRIEN commenced the challenging task of providing gay and lesbian "information and referral services to members of the ADF." The network began as an e-mail distribution list and a Geocities webpage. The network eventually became the Defence Gay and Lesbian Information Service: DEFGLIS (renamed Defence LGBTI Information Service in 2011).**

**DEFGLIS has served as both an advocacy group for LGBTI Defence members, as well as a social group. Since 2008 they have marched in Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras, and since 2013 the Chief of the Defence Force has approved them marching in uniform. DEFGLIS also organises events such as a ski trip, meet-ups in the various Australian cities, and has made submissions to inquiries on LGBTI rights and veterans' issues.**



**In 2015, DEFGLIS organised the first annual Military Pride Ball. This formal event brings together service members past and present, representatives from the ADF and the public service and allies for an evening to celebrate diversity and inclusion in the ADF.**

**Since 2015, DEFGLIS has also organised wreath-layings on Anzac Day to commemorate LGBTI service members.**



CAPTION: Members of the Royal Australian Navy march in uniform for the first time at the 2013 Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras. Image courtesy Department of Defence.

CAPTION (LEFT): RAAF members with their friends and partners at the 2016 Military Pride Ball. Image courtesy of DEFGLIS.



Defence **LGBTI** Milestones

**ADF contingent at Sydney  
Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras  
allowed to march in uniform for  
the first time.**

**MARCH  
2013**



Defence **LGBTI** Milestones

**DEFGLIS begins annual rainbow wreath-layings, with one of the surviving GESA members laying Melbourne's wreath at the Shrine of Remembrance.**

**ANZAC DAY  
2015**



Defence **LGBTI** Milestones

**DEFGLIS hosts the first  
annual Military Pride Ball.**

**SEPTEMBER  
2015**





**What stands out now, though, is the support LGBTI members provide each other – and provide each other openly – to advocate for a better ADF. They are no longer serving in silence.**

CAPTION (ABOVE): Leaders of ADFA's LGBTI Group receive DEFGLIS Awards for Excellence at the 2017 Military Pride Ball (left to right): DEFGLIS President Vince Chong, Officer Cadet Connor Haas, Air Vice-Marshal Tracy Smart, Midshipman Jake Moir, Defence People Group's Executive LGBTI Champion Richard Oliver, Officer Cadet Riley Bradford.

# LGBTI Service and the ADF today

**SERVING IN SILENCE?**  
 Australian **LGBTI** Military Service since World War II

**THE ADF HAS COME A LONG WAY IN 25+ years, moving from merely tolerating gays and lesbians to actively embracing LGBTI service for the diversity and capabilities they provide to the organisation.**

**Of course, there are still challenges for LGBTI service personnel. Not everyone in the ADF has embraced the inclusion agenda, though importantly the service chiefs have been vocal in their support for LGBTI members.**

**HIV positive people still cannot enlist, and those who seroconvert (contract HIV) while serving face restrictions on their opportunities for promotion, transfer and deployment.**

**Transgender and non-binary members have been particularly targeted by conservative media and politicians. A policy implemented in 2015 ensured transgender health care while concurrently making it more difficult to access surgeries.**

**In 2016 the ADF adopted rules allowing members to identify their gender as “Indeterminate / Intersex / Unspecified (X),” but still they must identify their sex as male or female. The Australian Defence Force Academy has been the main site where non-binary members have come out, and the services have had to grapple with non-binary members’ lodging, fitness standards, and uniforms.**

CAPTION (BELOW): SX cover story about the first DEFGLIS rainbow wreath-layings on Anzac Day 2015.





**We wish to thank  
the interviewees who  
generously provided material  
for this exhibition, as well as the  
following people for their assistance:**

**Julien Varrenti-Osmond and Al Noveloso (ACU),  
Bronwyn Roper and Aimee Rhodes (Melbourne City  
Library), Kathy Sport and Nick Henderson (Australian  
Lesbian and Gay Archives), Lin Tobias for the panel design.**

**CURATORS:**

**A/Prof Noah Riseman (Australian Catholic University)**

**A/Prof Shirleene Robinson (Macquarie University)**

**Dr Graham Willett (Australian Lesbian and Gay Archives)**



# SERVING IN SILENCE?

**Australian LGBTI Military  
Service since World War II**





# SERVING IN SILENCE?

AUSTRALIAN LGBTI MILITARY SERVICE  
SINCE WORLD WAR II

THE GALLERY AT CITY LIBRARY

11 JANUARY TO 3 FEBRUARY

Launch: Wednesday 17 January, 6pm  
with former Commonwealth Attorney-General,  
the Honourable Michael Duffy

 midsumma  
festival

Australian Lesbian and Gay  
**Archives**

  
CITY OF MELBOURNE



# GALLERY AT CITY LIBRARY

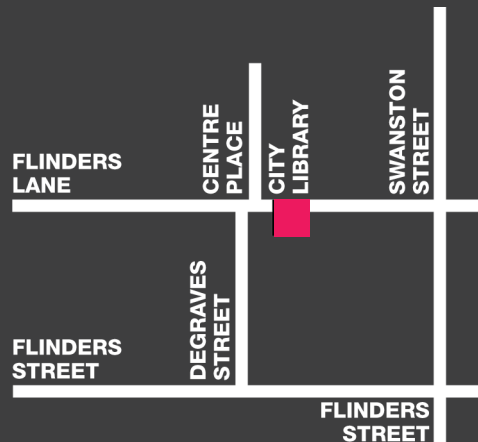
253 Flinders Lane, Melbourne  
T 03 9658 9500

**MONDAY TO THURSDAY** 8AM TO 7.45PM

**FRIDAY** 8AM TO 5.45PM

**SATURDAY** 10AM TO 4.45PM

**SUNDAY** 12PM TO 4.45PM



[melbourne.vic.gov.au/libraries](http://melbourne.vic.gov.au/libraries)







# midsumma festival

14 Jan – 4 Feb 2018



Celebrating 22 days of queer arts and culture

#midsumma  
[midsumma.org.au](http://midsumma.org.au)



## Exhibition



## Serving in Silence

Over 75 years of LGBTI military service in Australia

To commemorate 25 years since Australia lifted the ban on LGB military service, this exhibition charts the changing experiences of LGBTI servicemen and women since World War II. It brings together photos, objects, documents and the life stories of current and former service personnel to explore the adversities, challenges and achievements of LGBTI Defence members.

City Library Gallery  
253 Flinders Lane  
Melbourne

11 Jan – 3 Feb

Mon – Thu  
8am – 8pm  
Fri 8am – 6pm  
Sat 10am – 5pm  
Sun midday – 5pm

FREE



Image: Courtesy  
Department of Defence,  
copyright Commonwealth  
of Australia

## Exhibition



Wyndham Art  
Gallery  
177 Watton St  
Werribee

18 Jan – 18 Mar

Mon – Fri 9am – 5pm  
Sat – Sun 11am – 4pm

FREE

Shifting Elements and  
Camp Dogs: Kamahi  
Djordon King

A shift in focus towards multimedia

Originally from Katherine, Gurindji visual and performing artist Kamahi Djordon King has shifted his focus towards multimedia in this exhibition, showing the creation process of his painting as a film. Kamahi's artwork is inspired by nature. Kamahi has also begun to make sculpture, and this will be the first exhibition of his collection titled Tanha and the Camp Dogs, a homage to his late fur baby with her distinct colouring.

## Exhibition



Mister Morris Gallery  
20 Junction St  
Preston

19 Jan – 8 Feb

Opening 18 Jan  
6.30 – 8.30pm  
Exhibition Thu – Sun  
midday – 5pm

FREE

Steve Sumpton:  
Through the Screen

A photographic exploration of identity and perception

In his debut solo exhibition photographer Steve Sumpton recreates moments from his life that have helped shape the way he identifies with the LGBTQIA+ community. Manipulating visual cues to separate himself from these vivid, Crewdson-esque images, he invites you to connect with his work without restriction while bringing an awareness to the role perception plays on identity.

## Exhibition



GoGo Bar  
125 Flinders Lane  
Melbourne

9 Jan – 5 Feb

Mon – Thu 4pm – late  
Fri – Sun 11am – late

FREE

That's My Man:  
Nathan J Smith

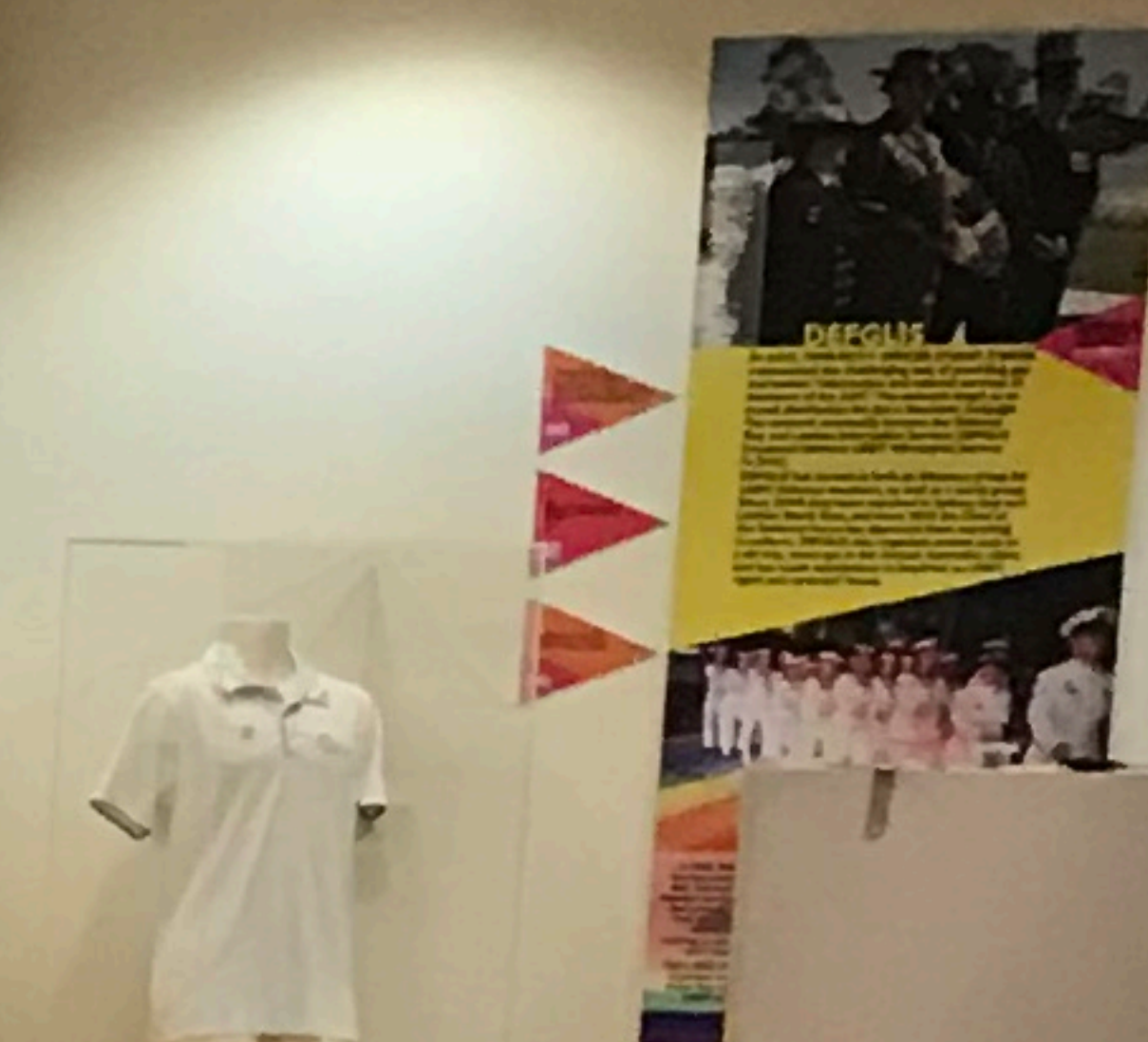
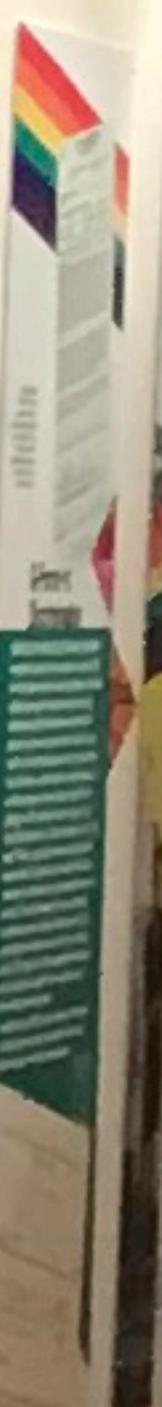
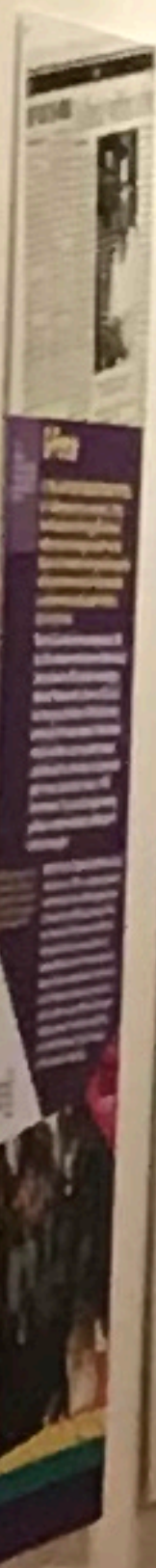
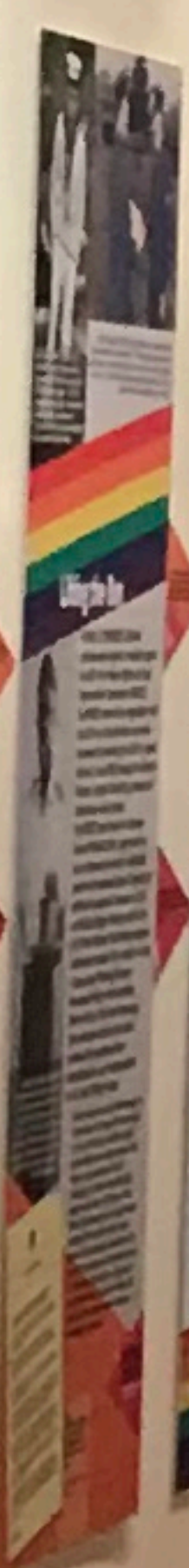
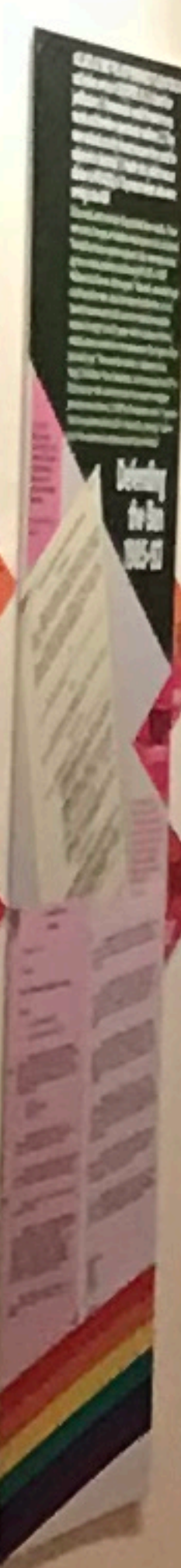
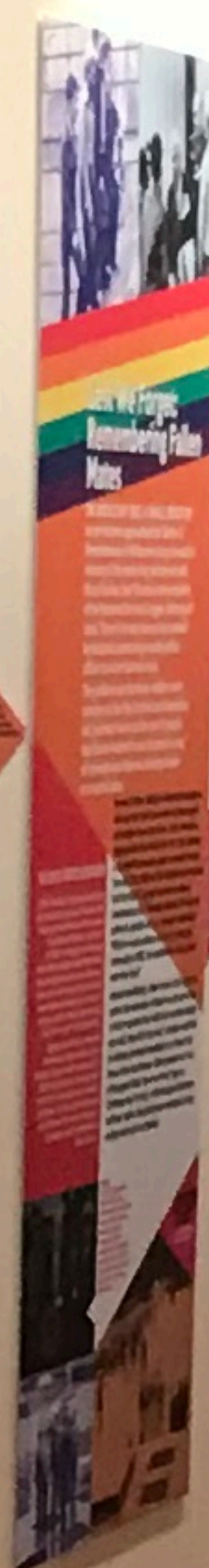
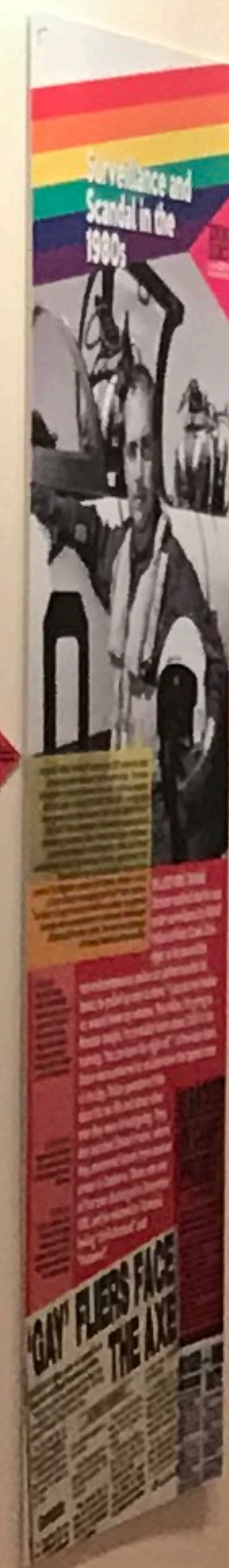
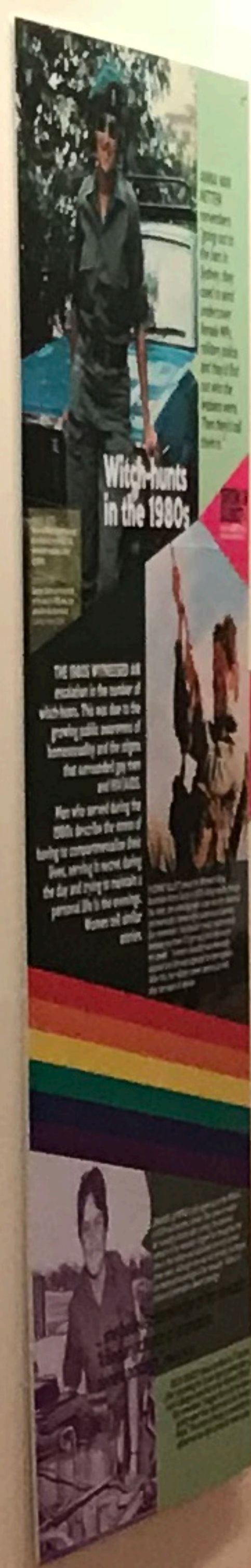
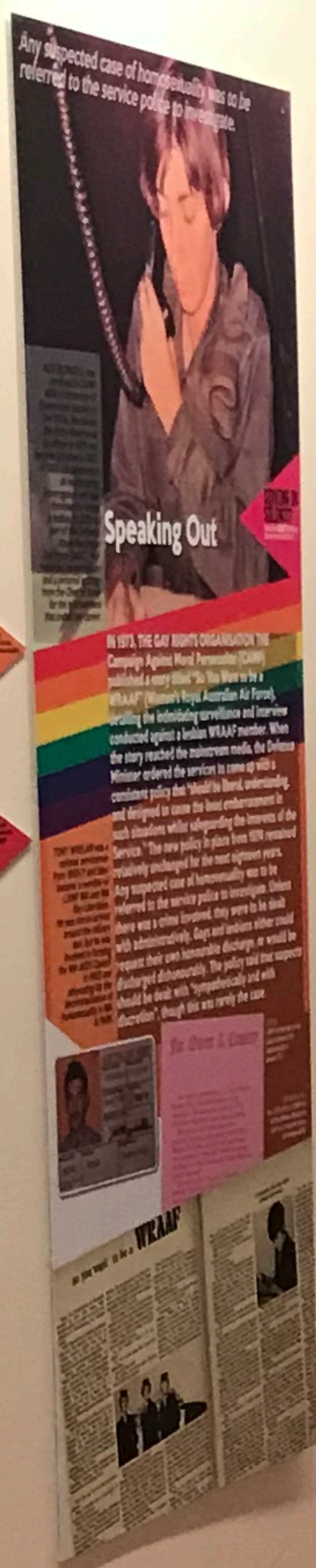
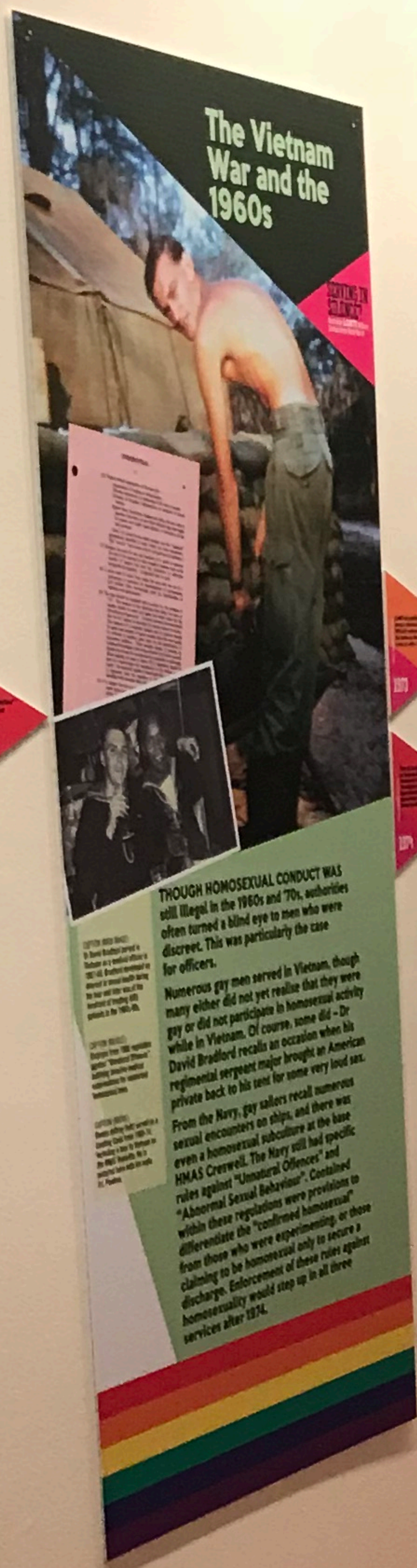
"What does it mean to be a man?"

It's a tough question to answer, one that Nathan J. Smith just couldn't fathom on his own and as such, turned to six of the most life changing and influential men he had ever met. What will a father, ex-boyfriend, lawyer, sponsor, counsellor and close friend reveal? Head to the exhibition and answer it for yourself.













These medals were awarded to Dennis Jeffrey for his service in the Royal Australian Navy. The Victoria Cross was awarded for his actions during the 1969-74 period.



Handwritten letter from Dennis Jeffrey to his partner, dated 1969. The letter discusses his time in the Royal Australian Navy and his feelings about his service.

Handwritten letter from Dennis Jeffrey to his partner, dated 1969. The letter discusses his time in the Royal Australian Navy and his feelings about his service.

Handwritten letter from Dennis Jeffrey to his partner, dated 1969. The letter discusses his time in the Royal Australian Navy and his feelings about his service.



Graham Corbrey realised at about the age of 27 that he was homosexual and in his own way made it part of his life. He was a sailor and a soldier. He was a man who was not afraid to be different. He was a man who was not afraid to be himself. He was a man who was not afraid to be who he was.



Handwritten letter from Dennis Jeffrey to his partner, dated 1969. The letter discusses his time in the Royal Australian Navy and his feelings about his service.

In 1974, Leading Cook Dennis Jeffrey turned himself into the Naval Police after having been AWOL for several months. While serving time in detention, he used to write letters to his partner, whom he addressed as "Bub". He also would write notes on the envelopes and back of telegrams from Bub. When Naval Police realised Bub was a man, they moved Dennis to another cell. He was already discharging after serving his sentence, so they never charged him for abnormal sexual behaviour. Dennis saved the letters and telegrams, as well as the photographs of his Navy service 1969-74.

Tony Whelan was a national serviceman from the police at James Cook University and in the Anniversary of National Service 1951-1972.



CONFIDENTIAL AUSTRALIAN NAVY ORDER

By direction of the Naval Board.

The Flag Officer Commanding HMA Fleet, Flag Officer and Naval Officers in Charge, Captains and Commanding Officers of HMA Ships, Officers and Commanding Officers of HMA Establishments, and others in Charge of HMA Naval Establishments, are directed to observe the following:

1. The enclosed order is promulgated for information, guidance and necessary action.

2. Orders containing classified information of United Kingdom origin are indicated by a star.

3. Orders containing classified information of United Kingdom origin are indicated by a star.

4. Orders containing classified information of United Kingdom origin are indicated by a star.

5. Orders containing classified information of United Kingdom origin are indicated by a star.

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Leading Aircraftman Kyle Duffield turned himself in for homosexuality in 1989. Before discharging, RAAF Police questioned him about his sex life in the hopes of uncovering other gay servicemen. Kyle saved a copy of the police interview transcript. These transcripts were not always a complete and accurate record of the conversation, often obscuring the intimidating police tactics.

Supper Rabout



# SERVING IN SILENCE?

Australian **LGBTI** Military  
Service since World War II

Please join us for the exhibition launch  
by the Hon. Alex Greenwich, MP.,  
Independent Member for Sydney

**27 February 2018 (6:30pm)**

**Tap Gallery**  
259 Riley Street Surry Hills NSW 2010  
Sydney, Australia

Please RSVP by 19 February 2018 to  
[shirleene.robinson@mq.edu.au](mailto:shirleene.robinson@mq.edu.au)



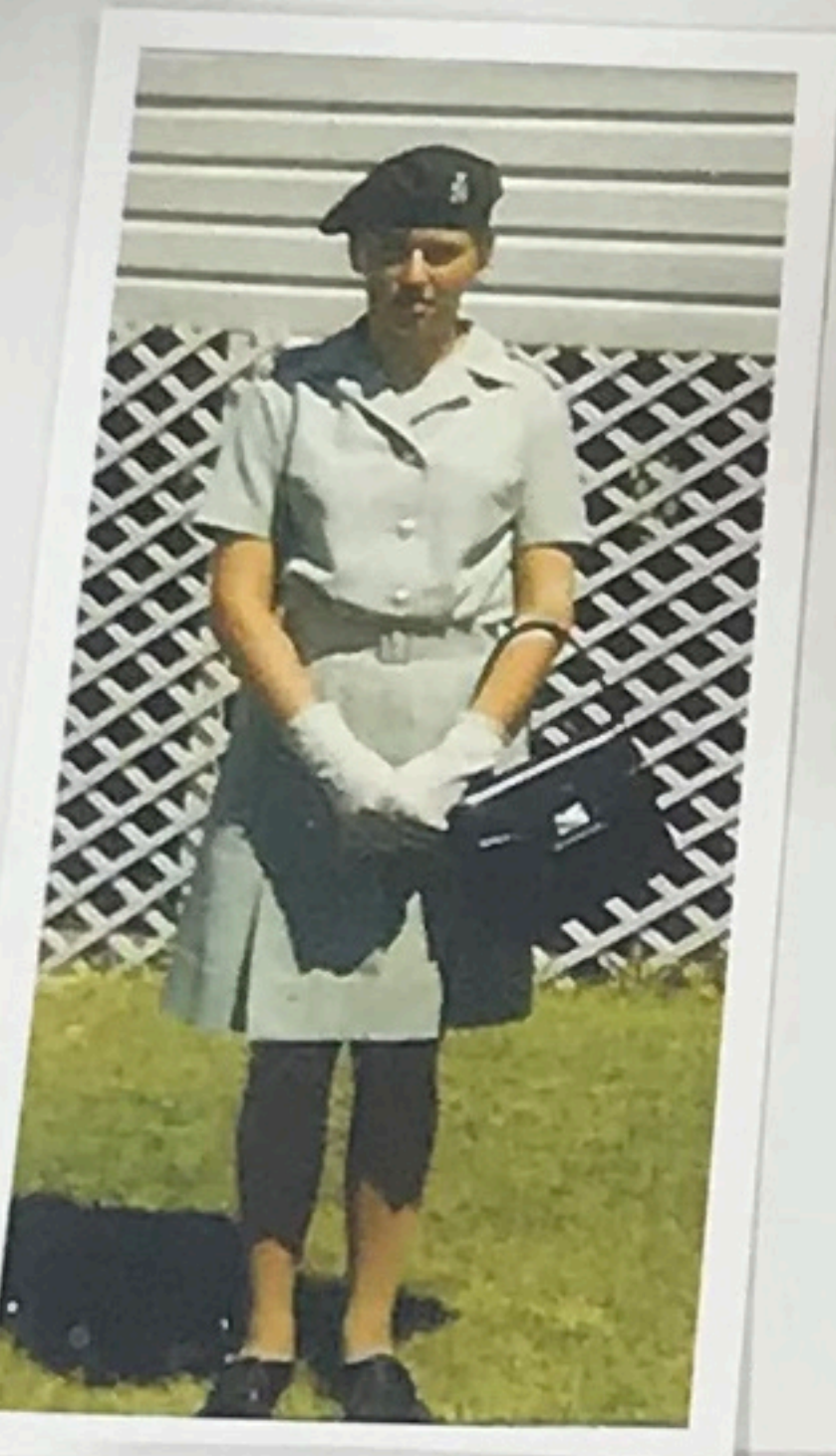




Anna van Netten joined the Women's Royal Australian Army Corps in 1973. She left the Australian Defence Force in 1983. She has found the following items, which provide insight into the world of female service in this era.



WRAAC uniform jacket and trousers. Anna van Netten.



Photograph of Anna van Netten in the Women's Royal Australian Army Corps, 1979



Select Badges and buttons from Women's Royal Australian Army Corps and Royal Australian Corps of Transport (RACCT) 1973-1979. Anna van Netten.



Service dress hat with matching cravat, Women's Royal Australian Army Corps. Issued 1980-1989. Anna van Netten.



WRAAC Sewing Kit issued in 1973. Anna van Netten

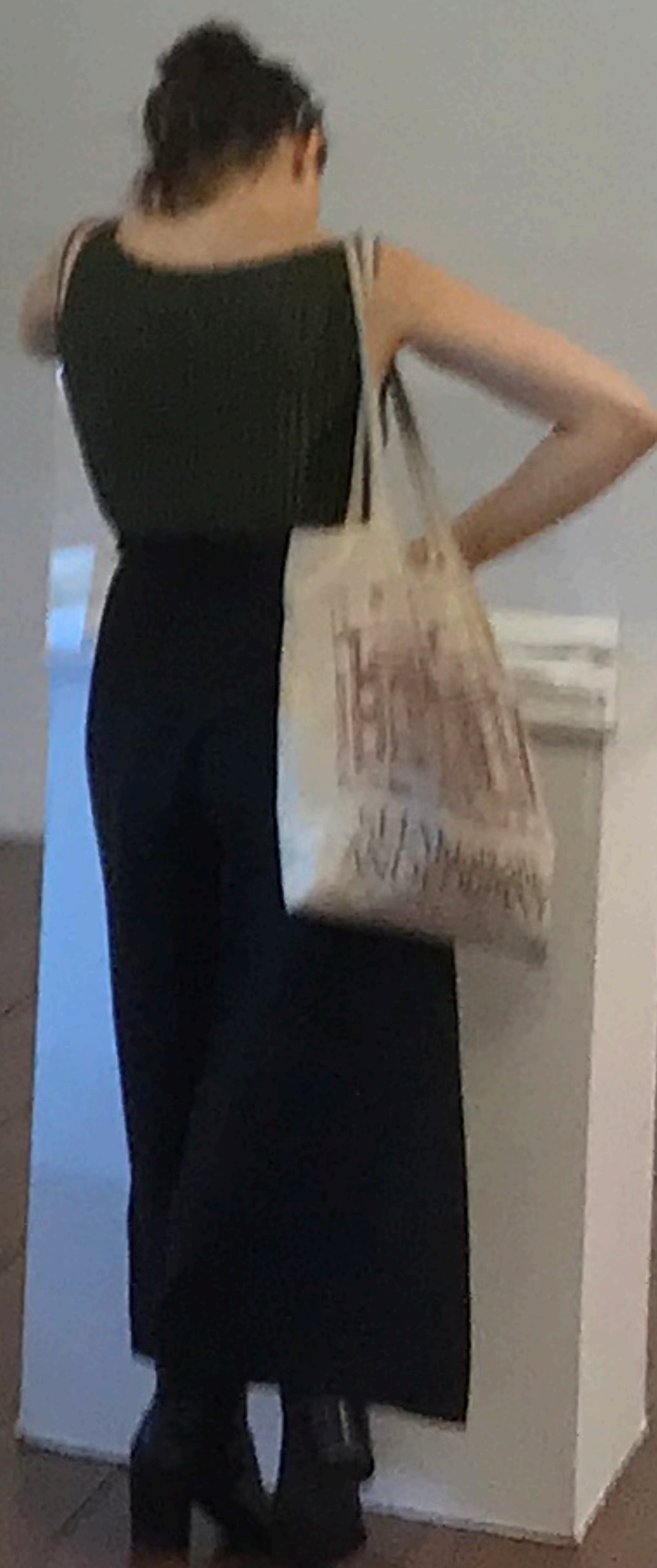
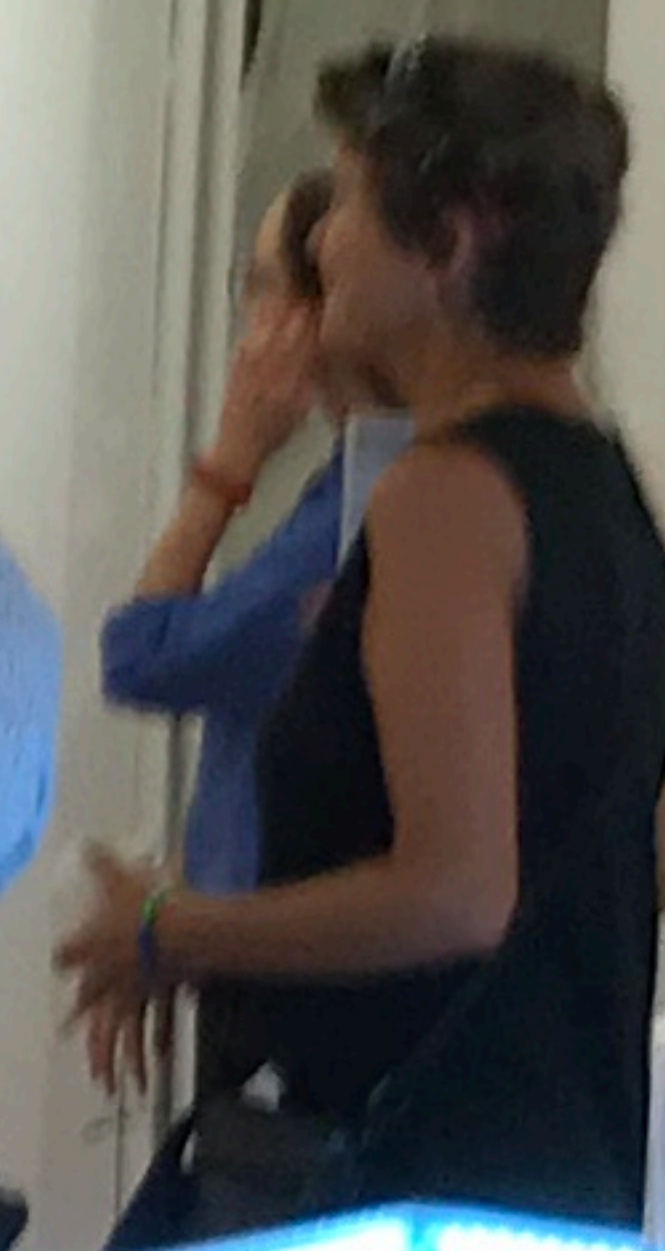
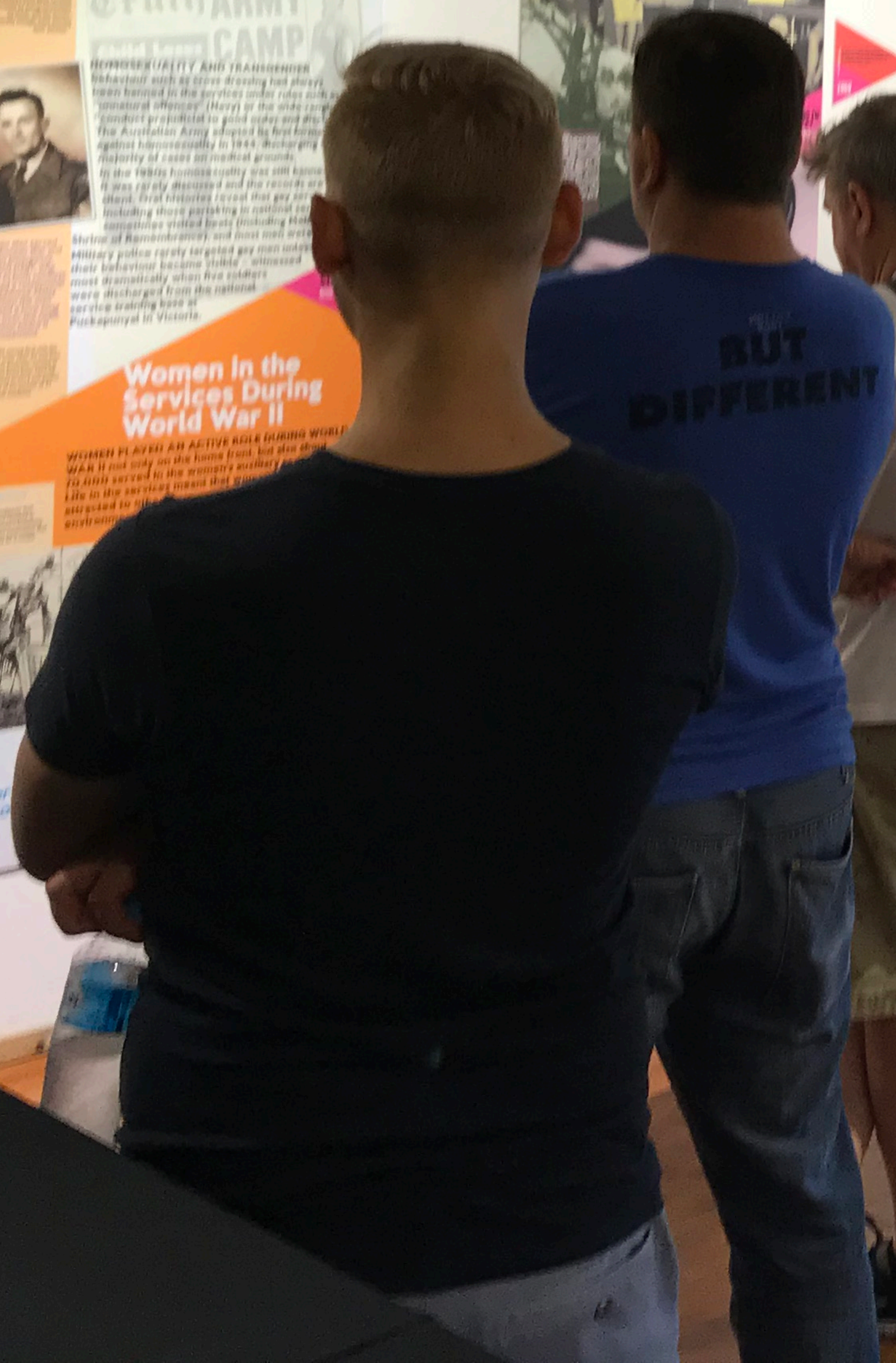
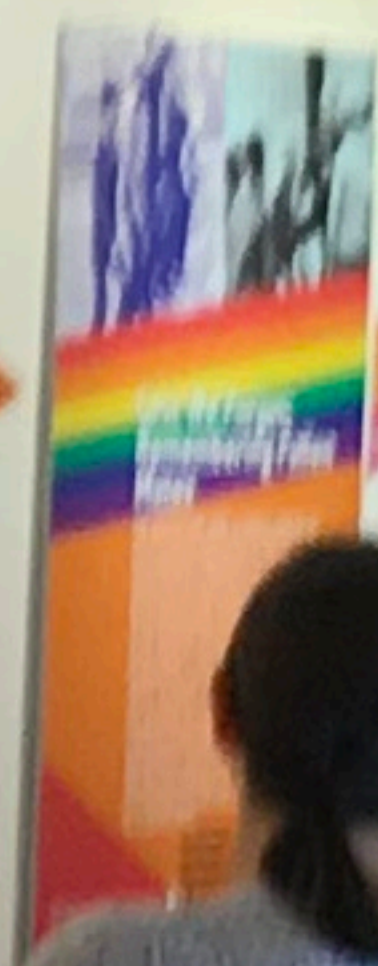
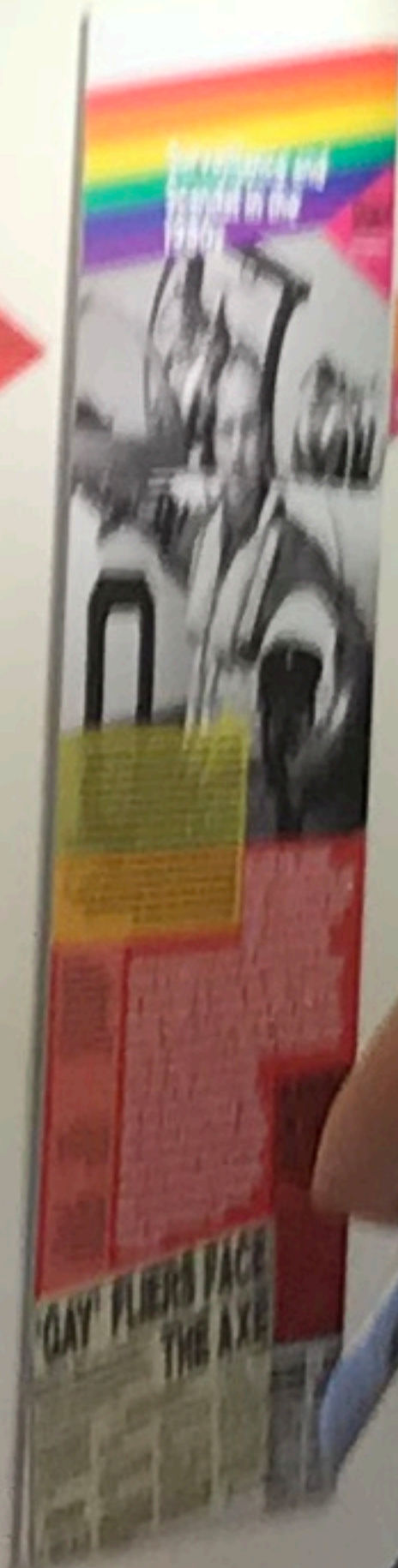
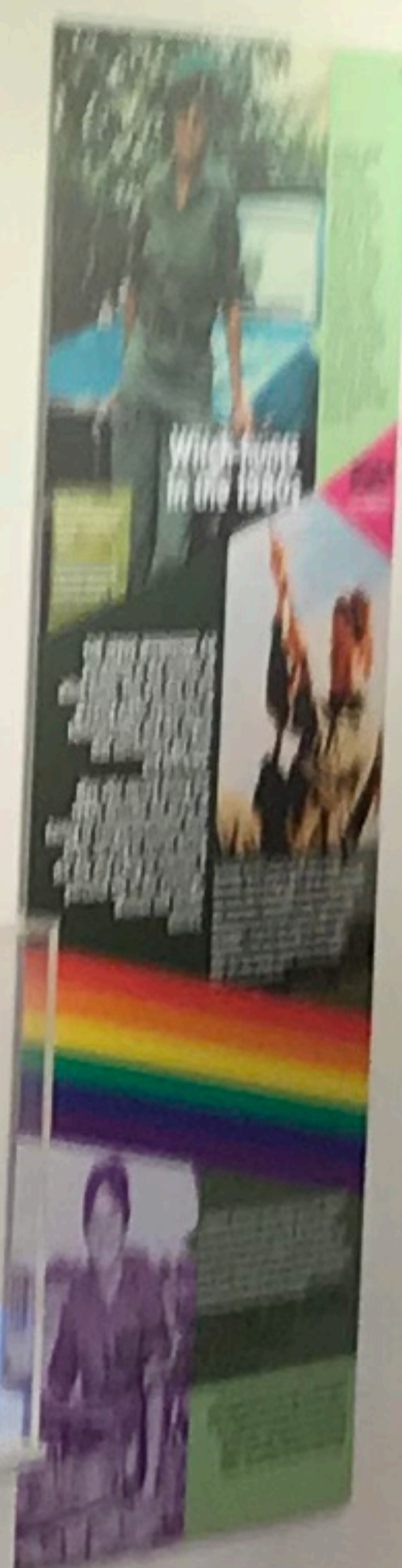
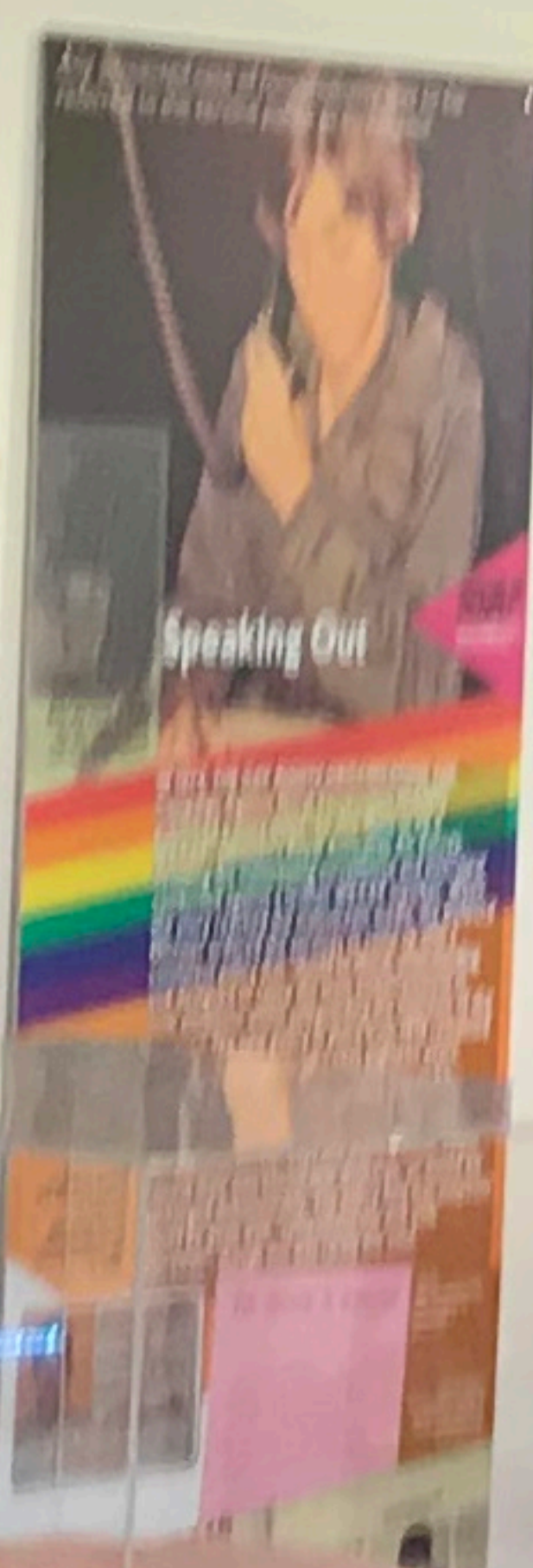
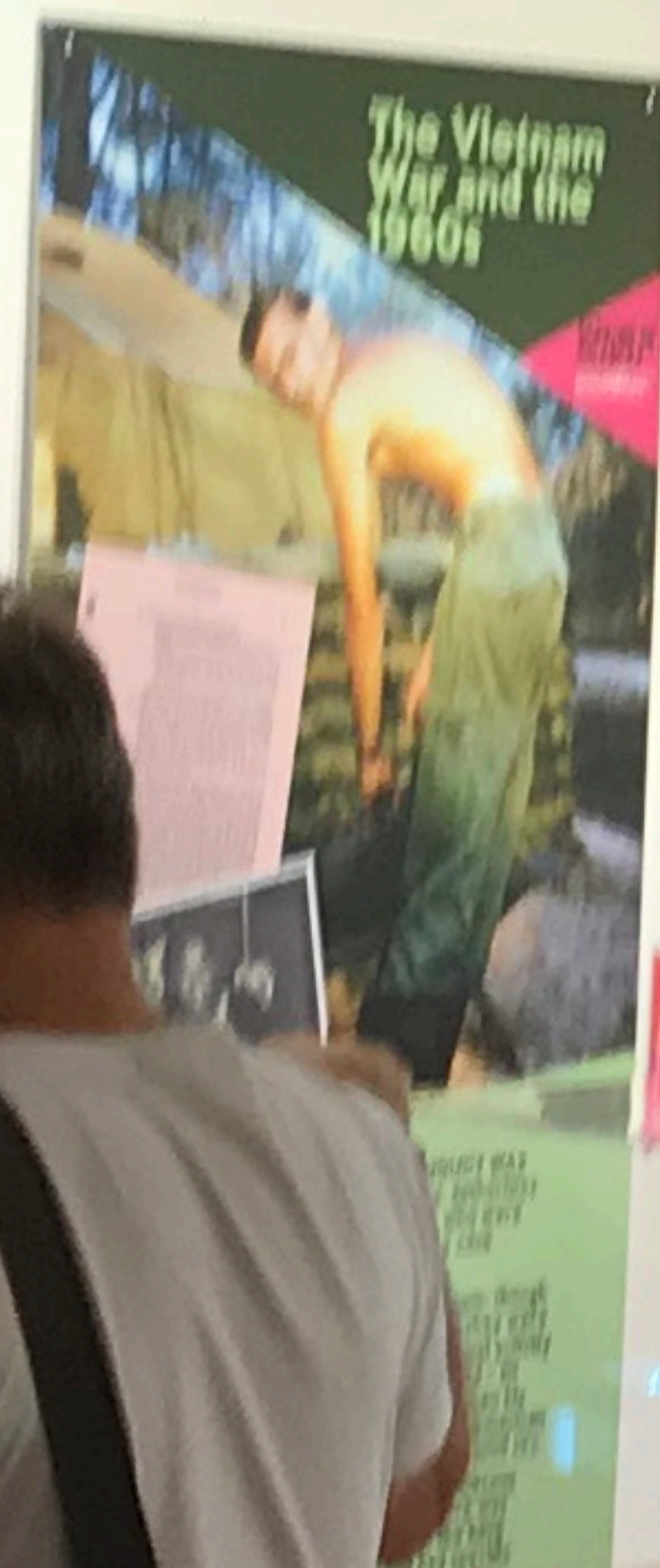
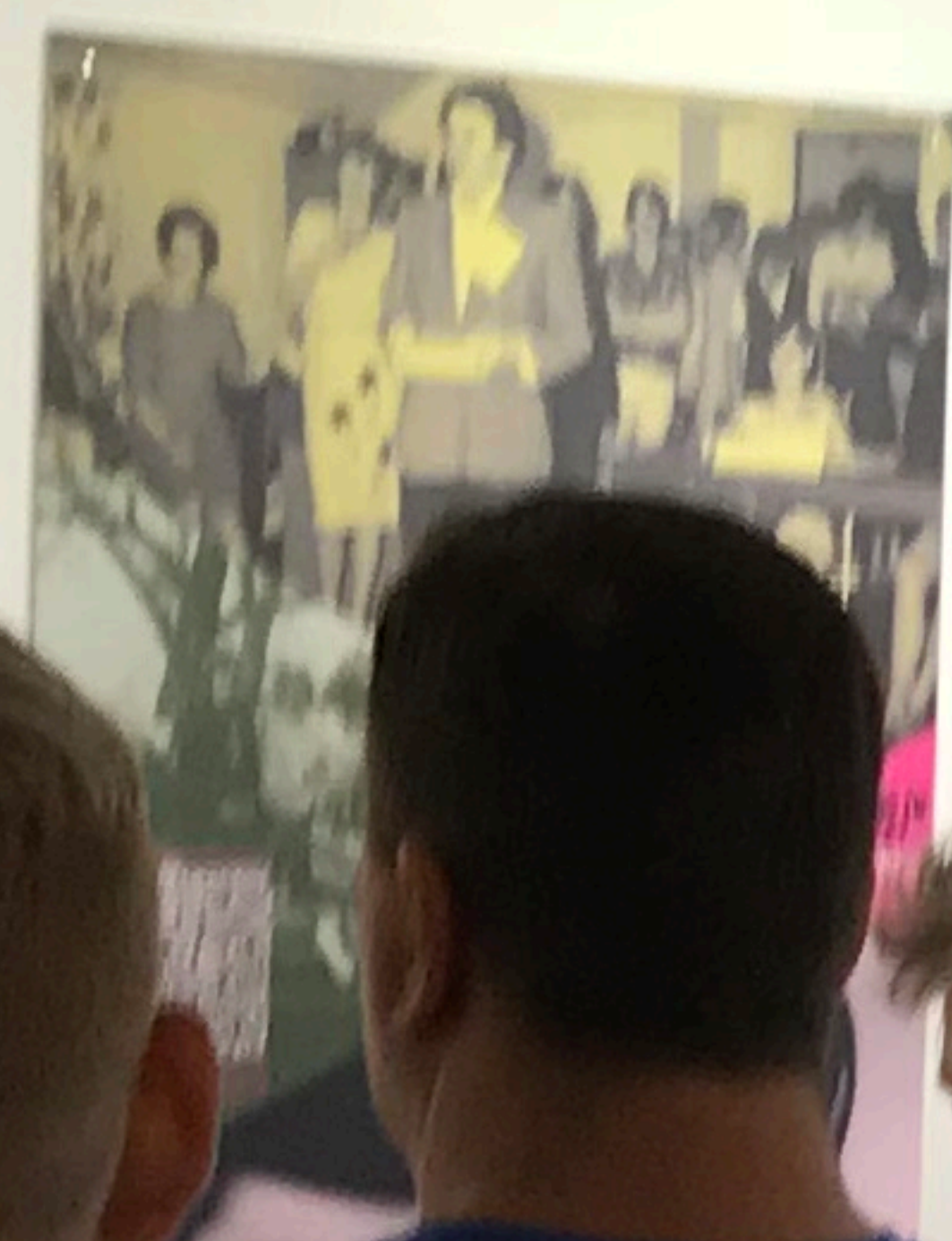
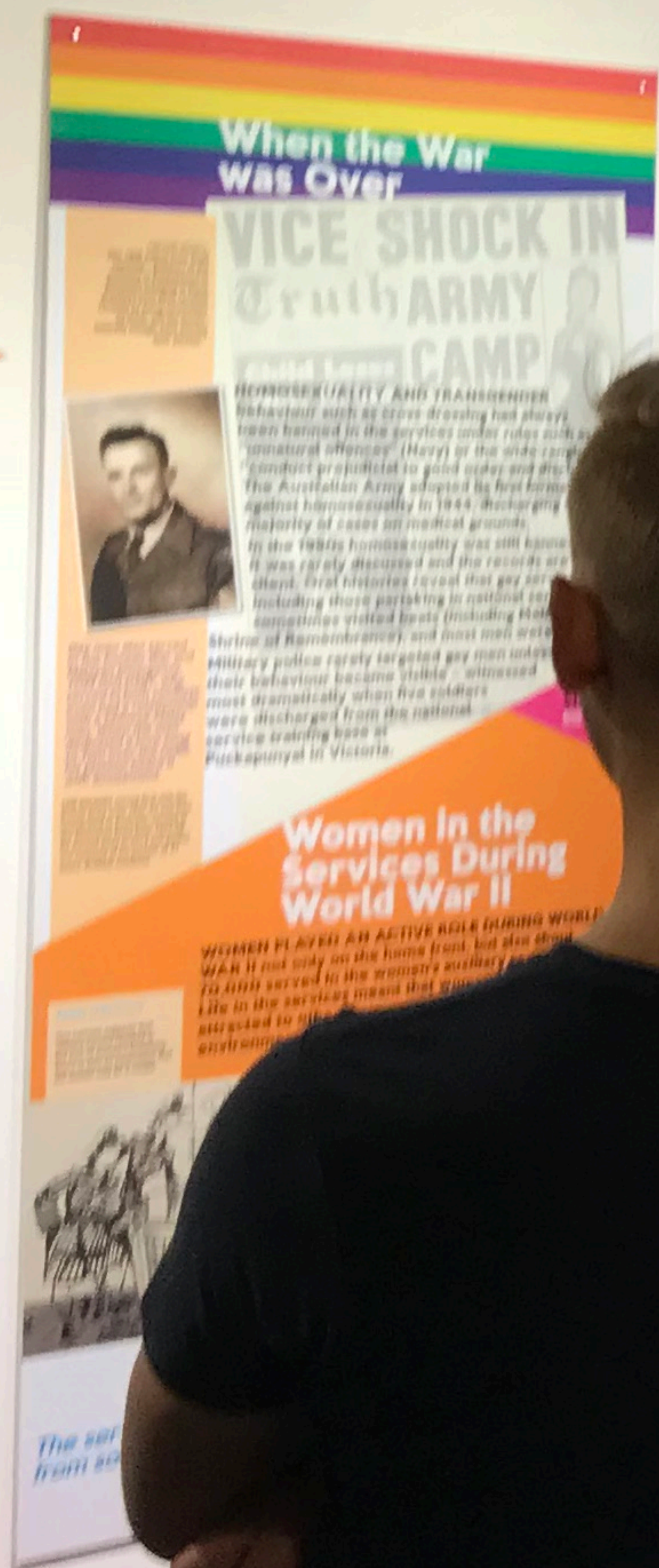


Service hat, Women's Royal Australian Army Corps. Issued 1970-1979. Anna van Netten

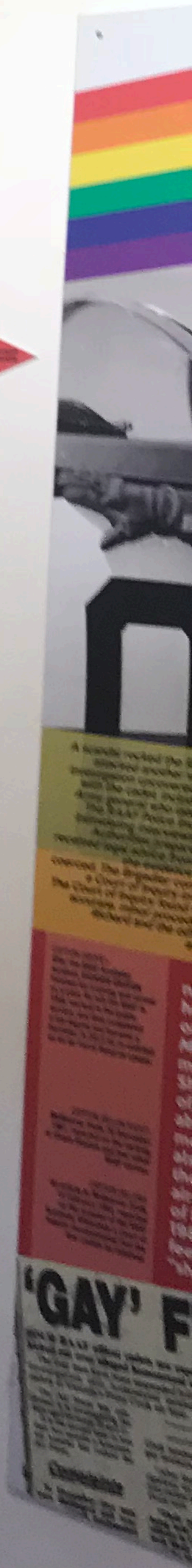
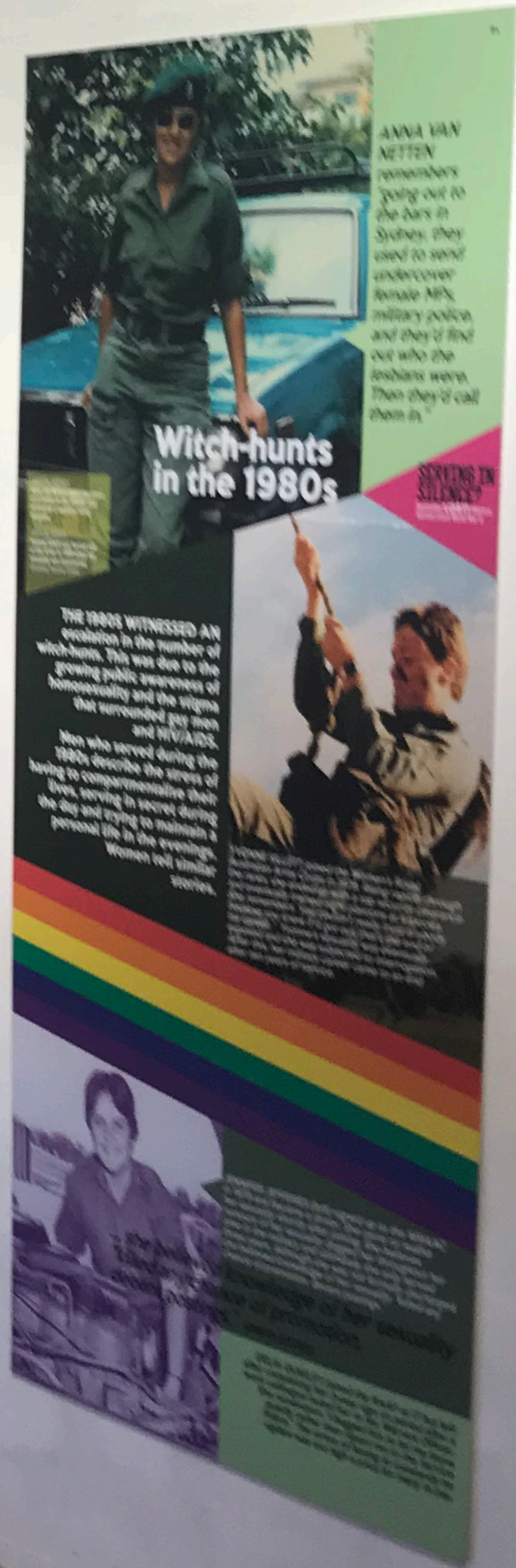
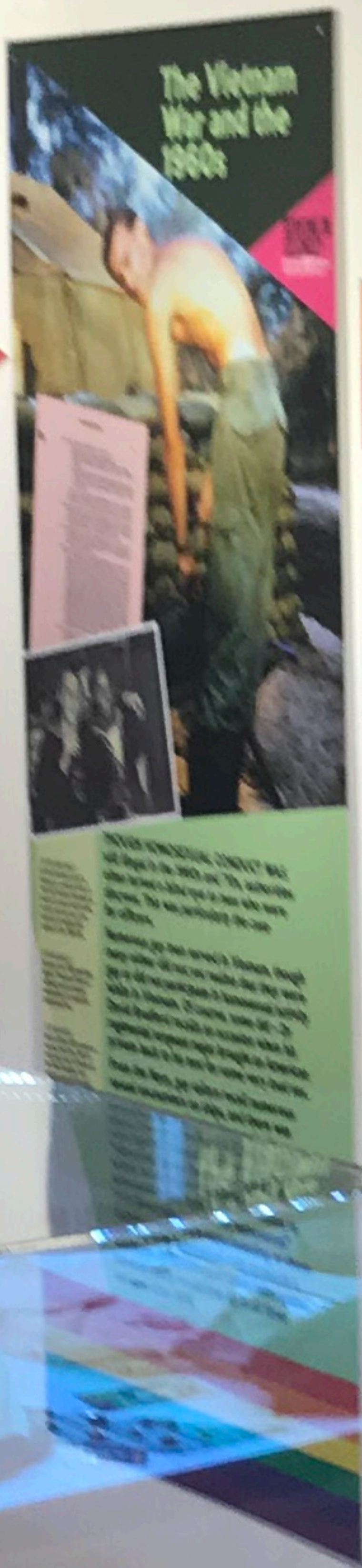
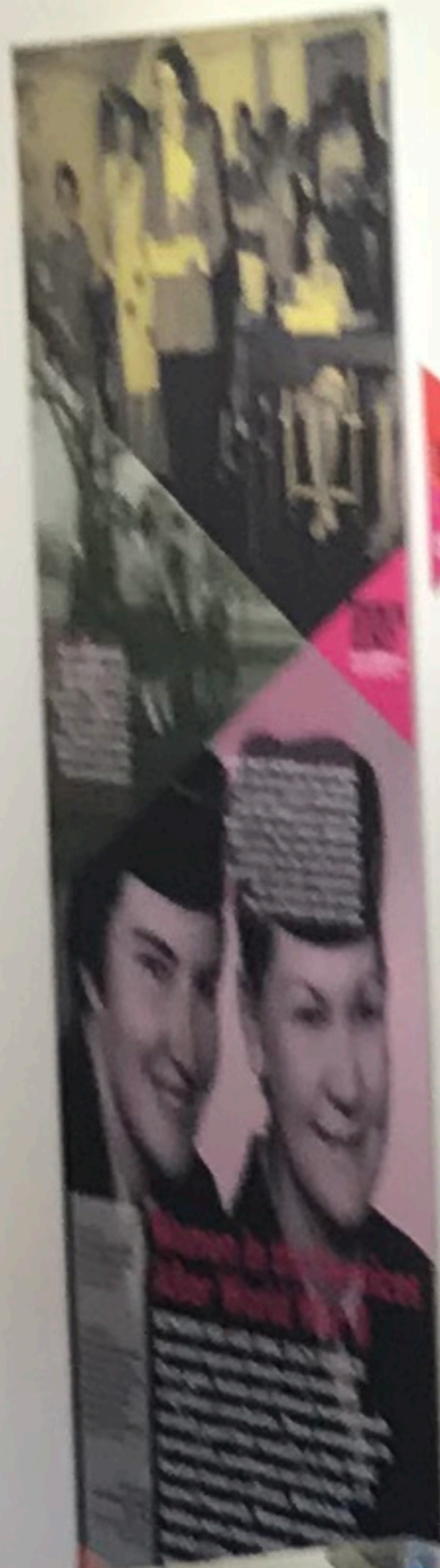
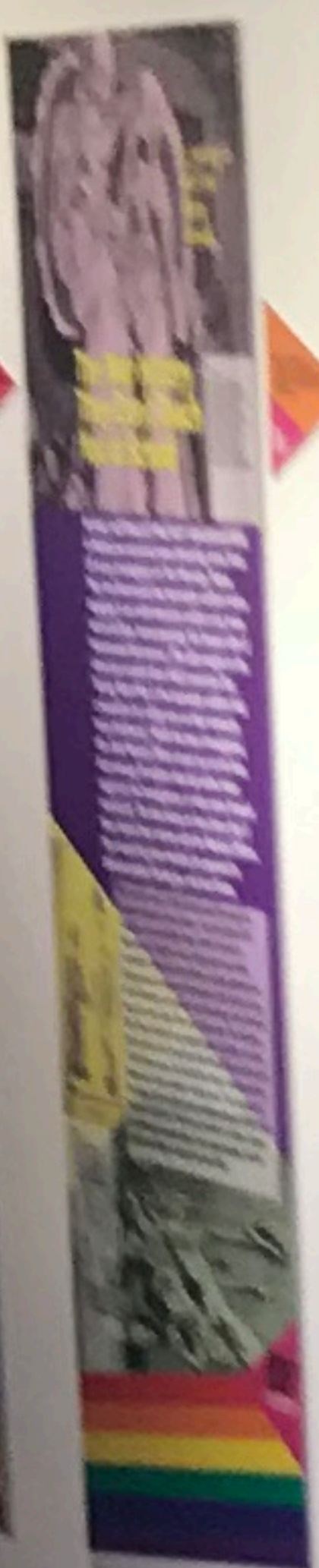
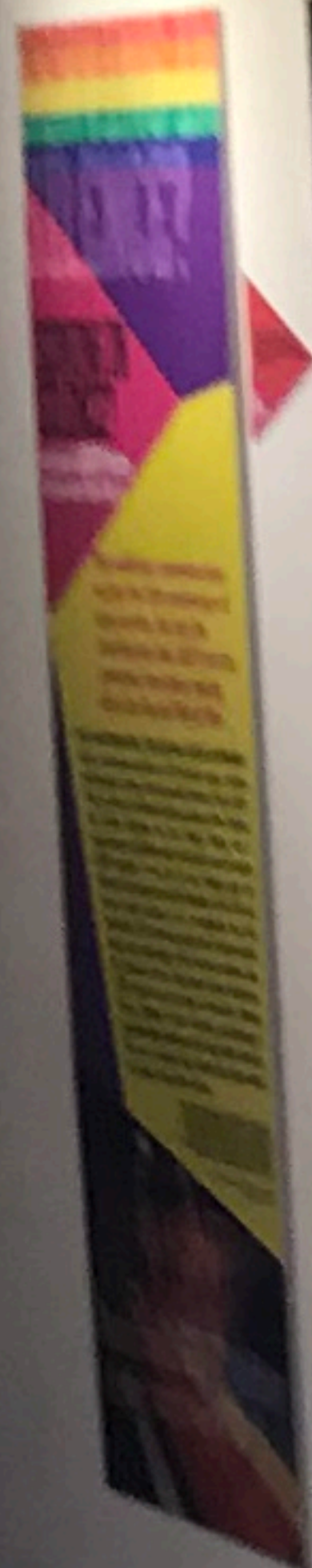


Tony Whelan was a national serviceman from 1969-71 and later was involved in queer politics at James Cook University and in Western Australia. On loan are his dog tags, Australian Defence Medal, and National Service Medal.

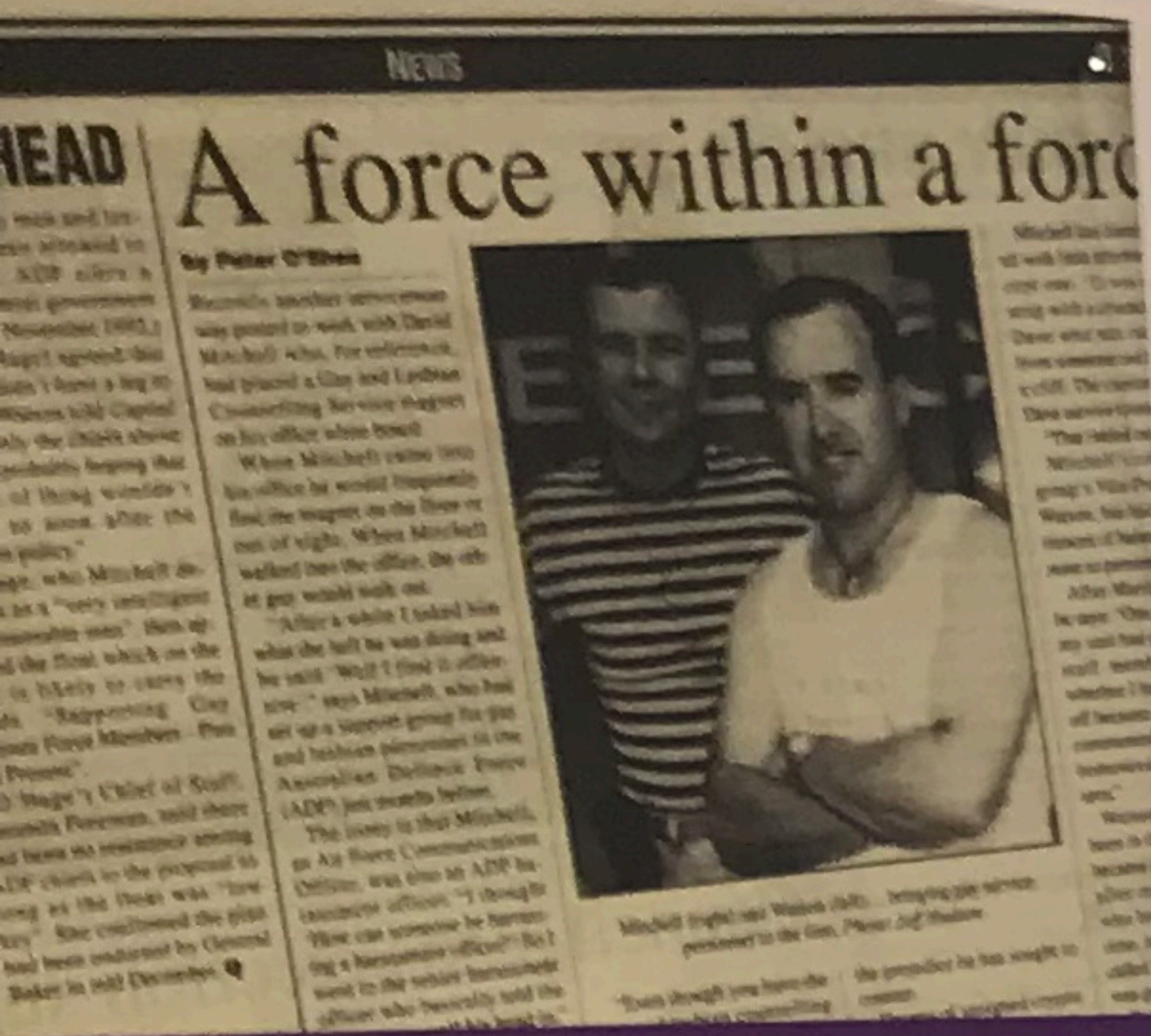










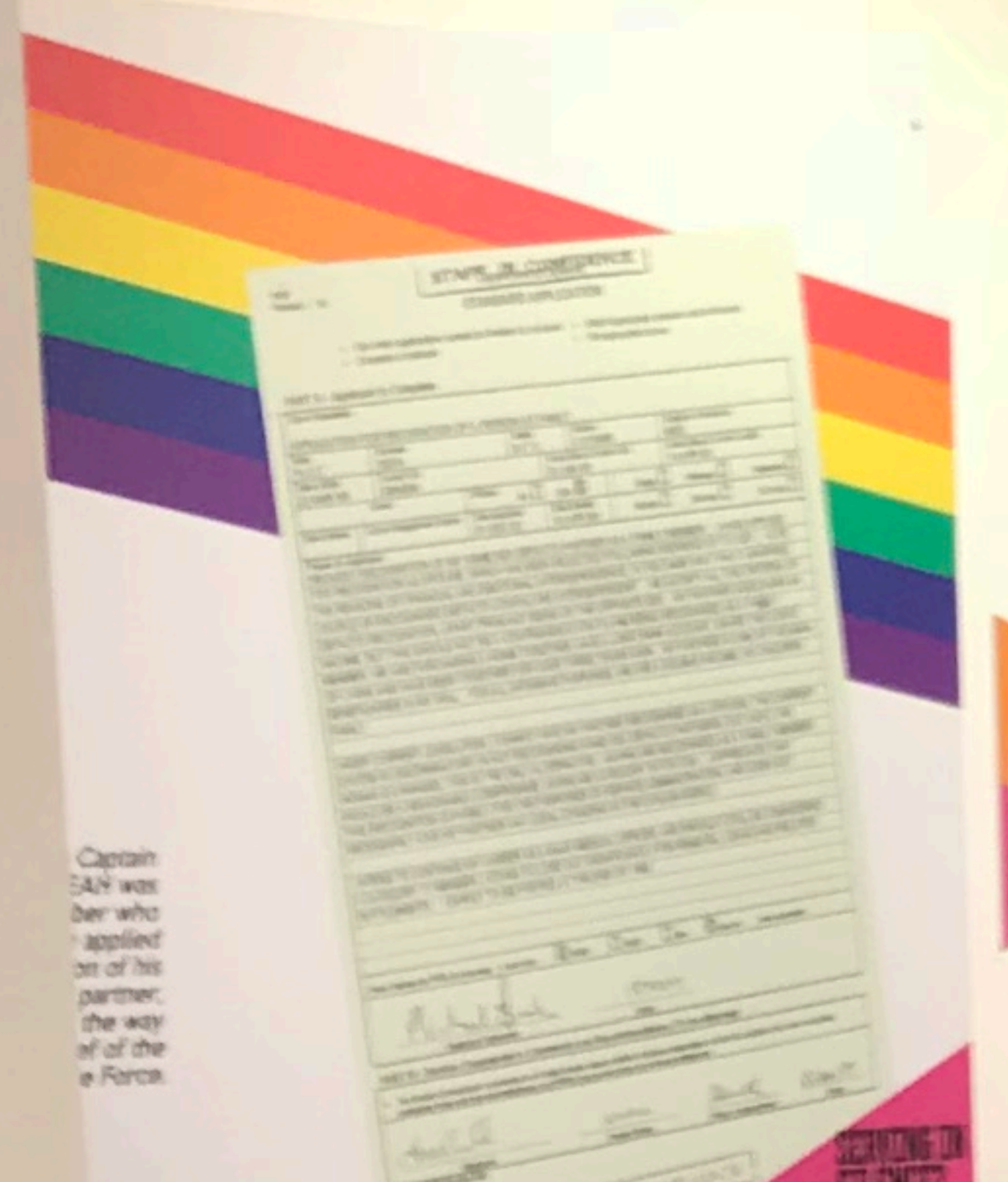
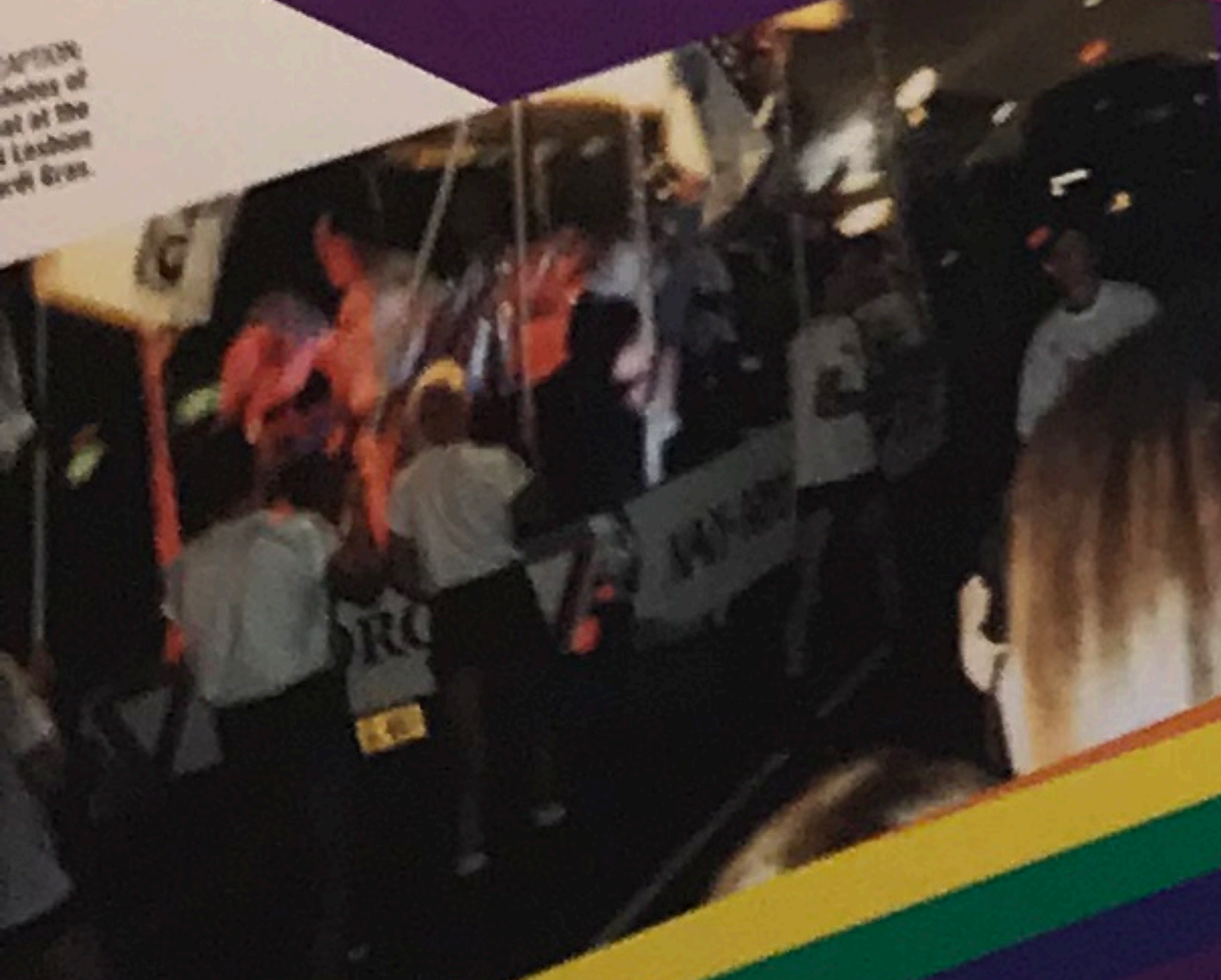


# G-Force

IN 1994, RAAF FLIGHT SERGEANT DAVID MITCHELL had a challenging coming out experience, finding himself isolated and suffering significant mental health problems. He managed to pull through the situation and, fortunately, found a generally supportive working environment where the little homophobia he encountered was usually quashed quickly by those in higher ranks.

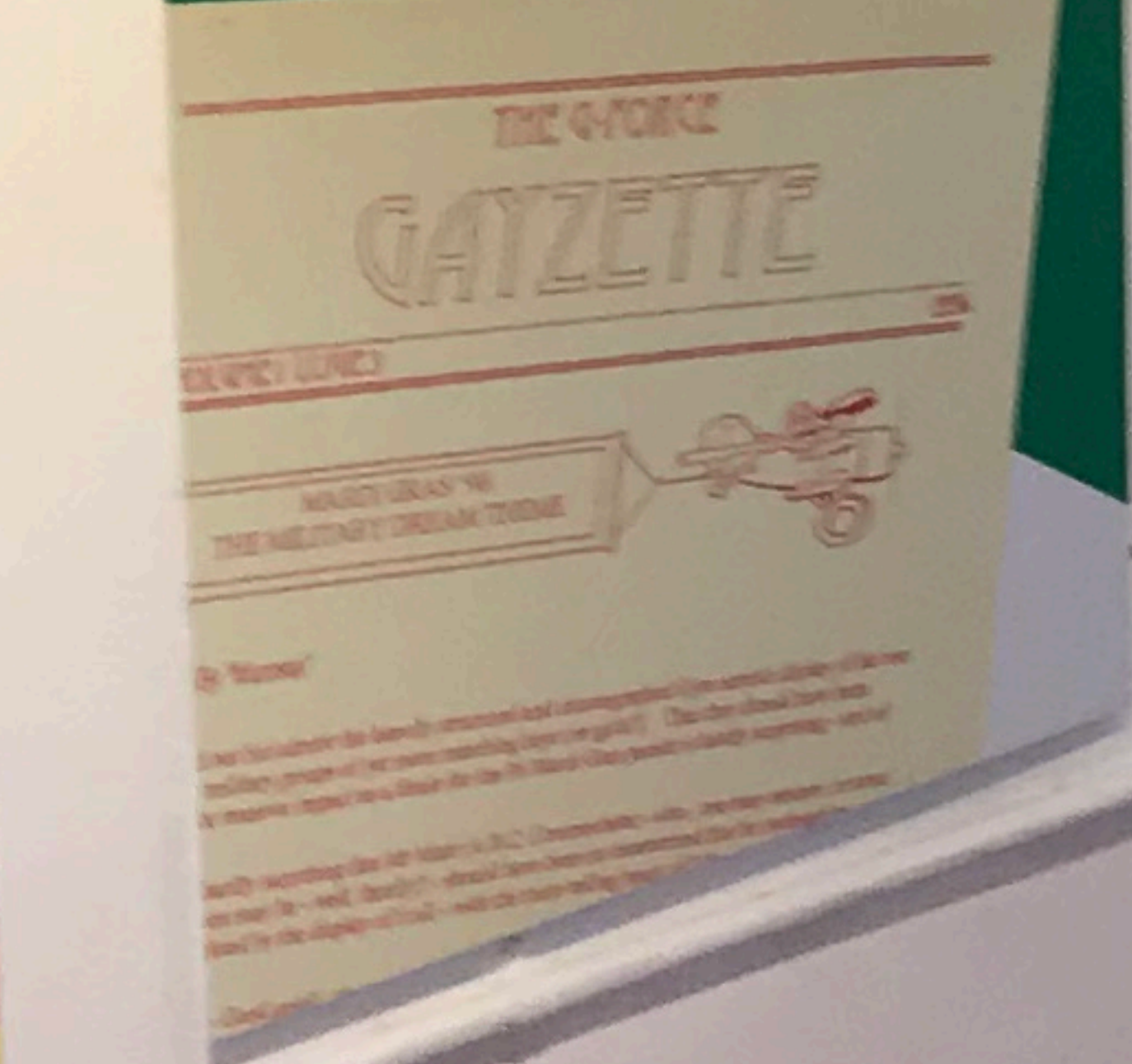
What he discovered as he was coming out was that lots of his comrades were less keen to follow his lead. Over and above the official policies tolerating gay, lesbian and bisexual service, there was still a lot of fear. Some gays and lesbians told Mitchell that they feared getting 'their head smashed in'. What Defence needed, he decided, was an 'organised presence', a club that could take up the issues, but also provide a place to meet, relax and talk. And so, in 1994 G-Force was born. The group held regular meetings, published a newsletter and talked comfortably with the forces' newspapers.

THE FIRST TIME THAT DEFENCE PERSONNEL MARCHED in Mardi Gras was in 1996 in a contingent organised by David Mitchell and G-Force. Mitchell approached the ADF leadership in mid-1995 about having a G-Force float. In November 1995 he received word that the ADF opposed the float, and a senior officer even threatened Mitchell's career if he went ahead with it. However, G-Force persisted because they knew that the ADF could not stop them so long as they did not march in uniform. In January 1996 the ADF changed its position to permit a 'non-military-looking' float, and in March 1996 between 10 and 20 members of G-Force marched in Mardi Gras.



## G-Force vs Discrimination

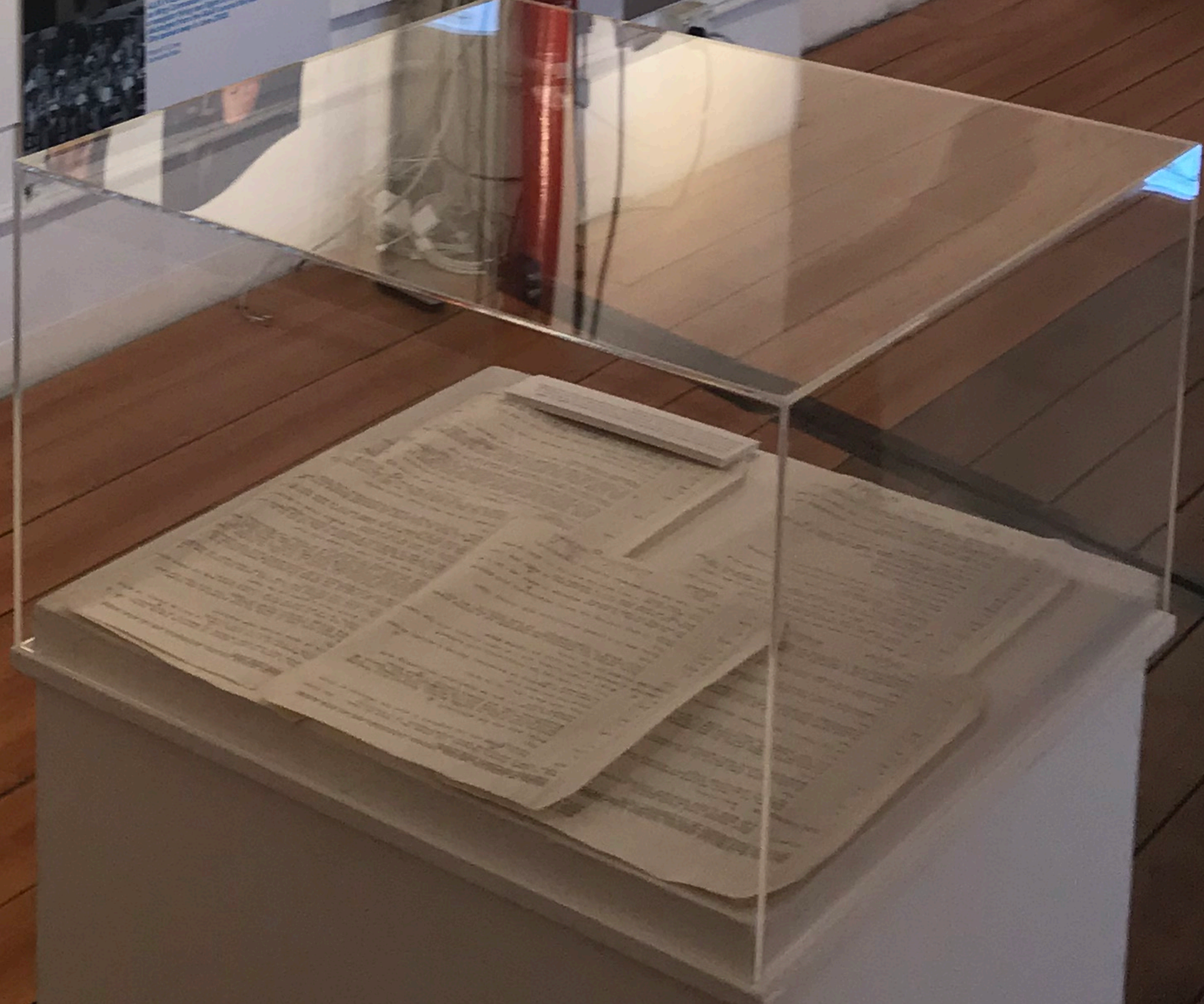
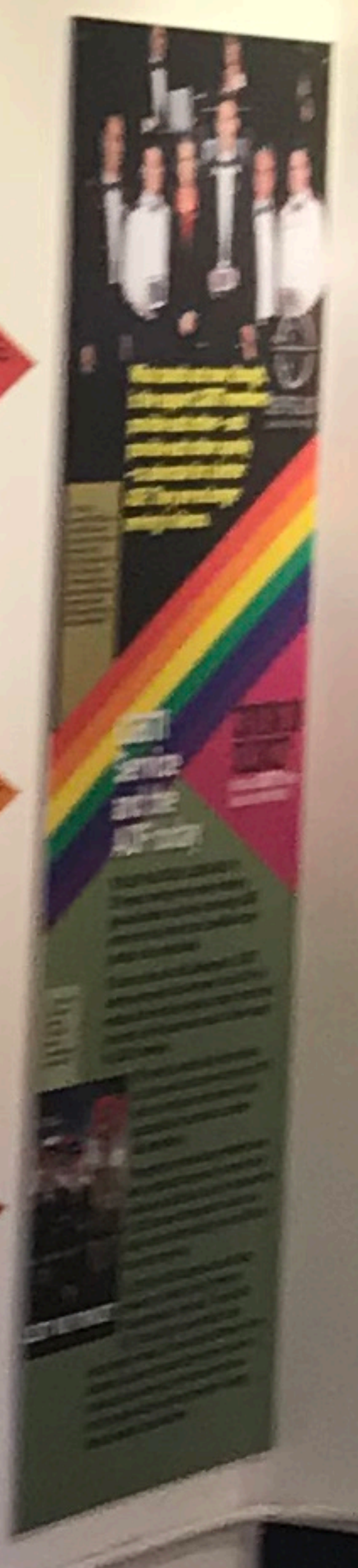
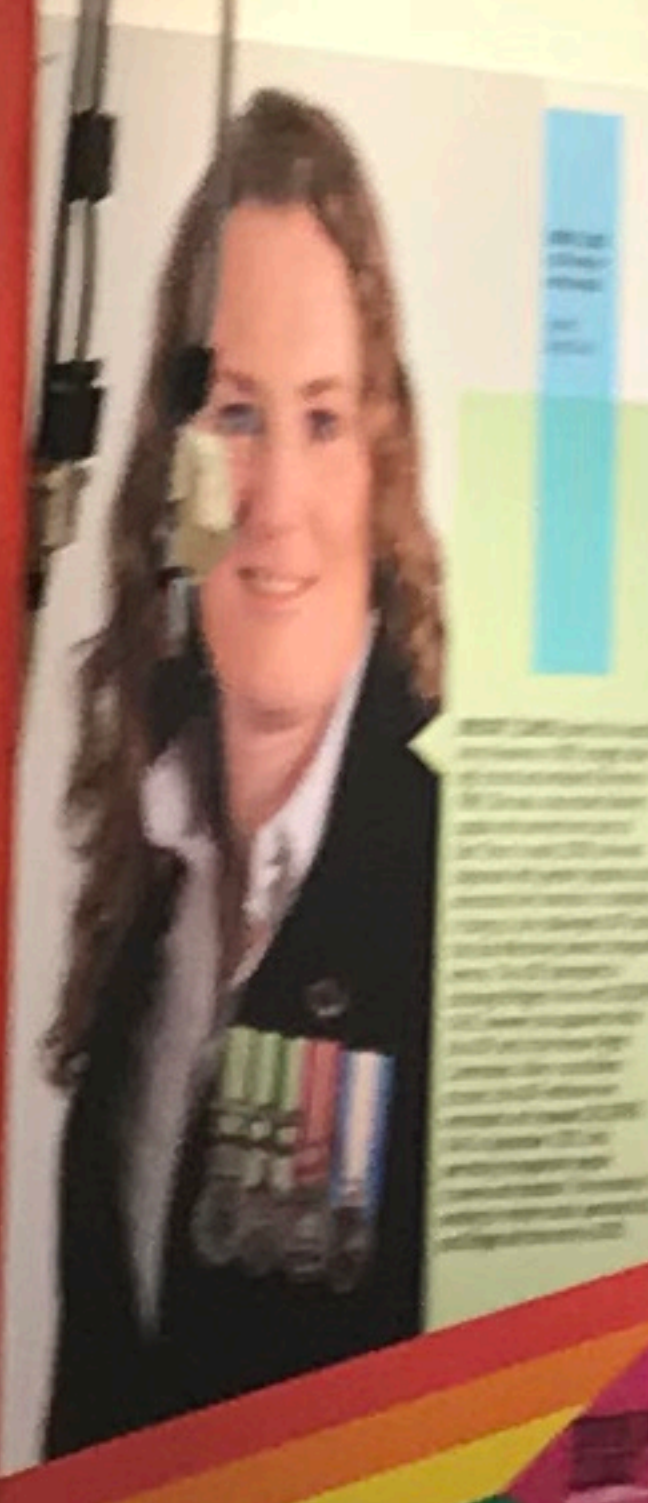
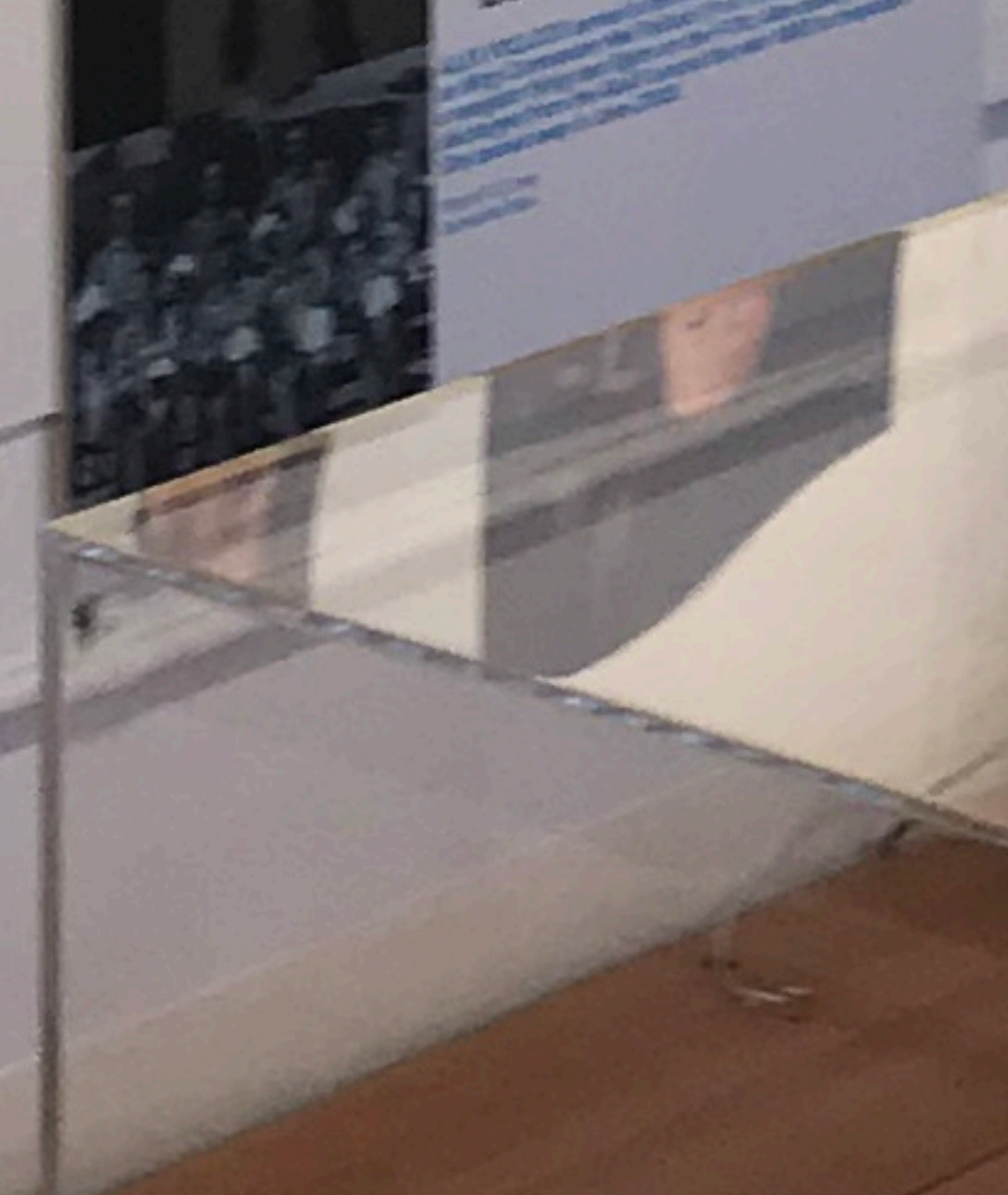
FOCUS OF G-FORCE'S ACTIVISM WAS FIGHTING FOR recognition of same-sex de facto partners. As early as 1993 the Army rejected a lesbian couple's application to have their relationship recognised because the policy on de facto relationships explicitly defined them as members of the opposite sex. Same-sex couples therefore could not access rights such as financial assistance during base transfers, allowances, married quarters, compassionate leave, pension programs and even pensions. Despite G-Force's petition, the ADF steadfastly refused to change its policy. In the Defence Force, General John Baker, wrote in one of his letters: "While you argue that the common [moral] standard is wrong, I do not believe that common standards make such sense. The only entitlements G-Force successfully secured were access to Defence Health, base entry rights and the right to be notified as next-of-kin in case of death. In 2005, though, the ADF unexpectedly released a new policy on de facto recognition that was gender neutral, including same-sex partners. The only entitlements G-Force successfully secured were access to Defence Health, base entry rights and the right to be notified as next-of-kin in case of death. In 2005, though, the ADF unexpectedly released a new policy on de facto recognition that was gender neutral, including same-sex partners.



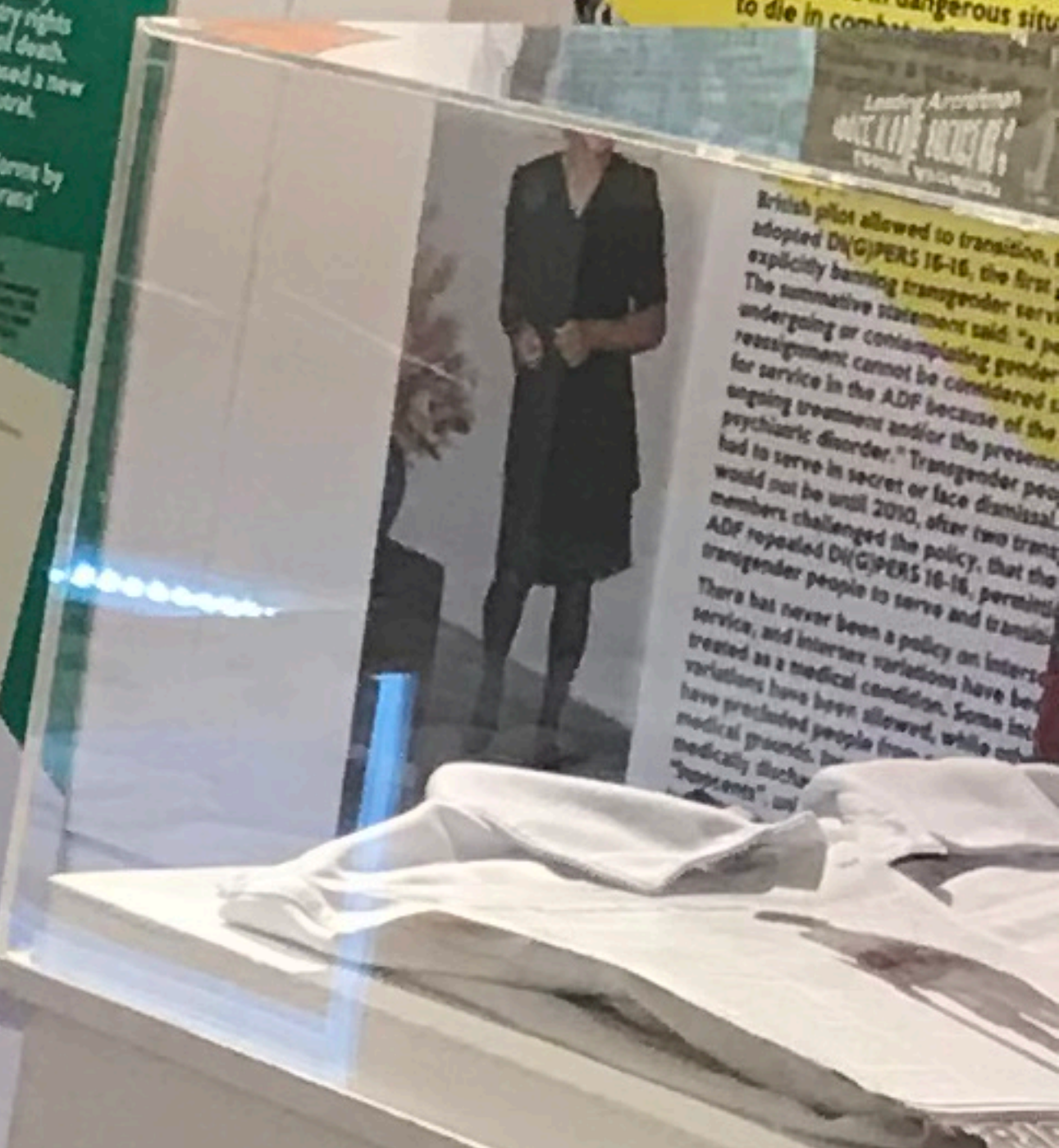
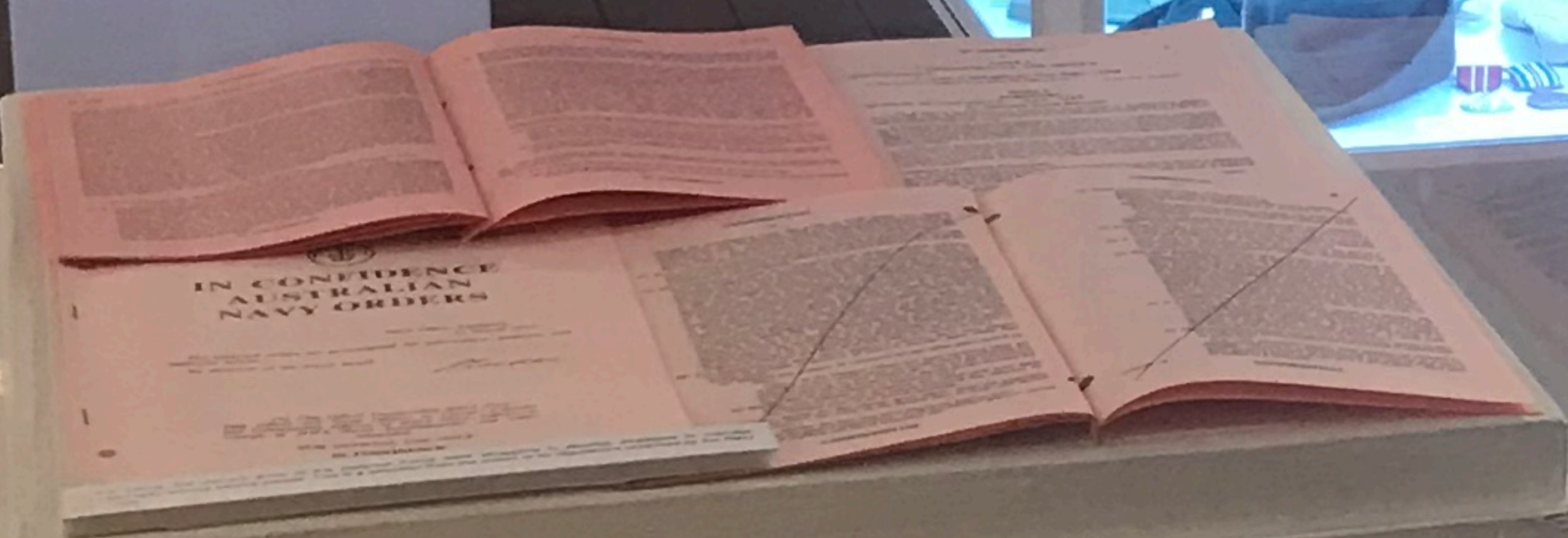
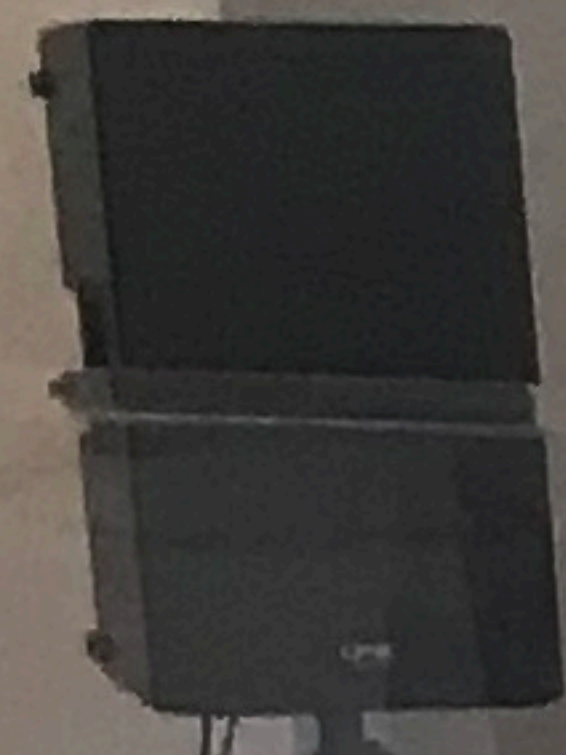
## Transgender and Intersex Policies

BEFORE 2005 THERE WAS NO SPECIFIC policy on transgender service. Though it was considered unacceptable under such as "conduct in the presence of your order". Soldiers from the US have downed the presence of transgender people in the military as a place where they can "express" their masculinity to themselves, preferring to die to combat rather than live with gender dysphoria. Pre-existence: "The people often find the military a place where they can safely exhibit 'masculine' behaviors."

In the year 2005, after being served a letter that stated in essence, "the ADF is not a place for transgender people", G-Force persisted. In 2006, the ADF released a policy on transgender service, allowing transgender people to serve in the military. The policy stated that transgender people could serve in the military, provided they were not in the process of transitioning. This policy was a significant step forward for transgender service members in the ADF.









# Serving in silence? Australian LGBTI military service since World War II

by [Managing Editor](#) Posted on [January 17, 2018](#)

Mitchell Naughton reviews a [museum exhibition](#) on Australia's history of LGBTI military service, running at the Melbourne City Library until 3 February 2018.

*"I don't know where all these gays and poofters have come from, I don't remember a single one from World War Two."*

[These were the words](#) of Bruce Ruxton, head of the Victorian Returned Serviceman's League during the 1980's. However as *Serving in silence?* shows, this was in fact far from true.



Royal Australian Air Force members, Sydney Mardi Gras parade, 2013. Photograph by Vick Gwyn, courtesy of the Australian War Memorial.

This exhibit at the Melbourne City Library commemorates not only the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of open services in the Australian military but also the achievements, sacrifices and contributions that members of the LGBTI community have made to the Australian Defence Force since the Second World War. Curated and researched by historians Noah Riseman, Shirleene Robinson and Graham Willet, this exhibit is part of both a [larger research project](#) and a forthcoming book by the trio set to be published in September this year.

The exhibition itself starts with a bright colourful panel that quips how this is the “the war history they didn’t teach you at school” and indeed it is. From military drag artists performing for their fellow troops at the camps, to gay men dedicating love



songs to each other over radio, these are stories that many of us have never been told. Beginning with the crack down on homosexual acts in Port Moresby, *Serving in silence?* then explores the invasive medical examinations against suspected gays and lesbians through to the 1950s and 1960s, the “witch hunts” by military police in the 1970s and 1980s and finally the ban on transgender soldiers in the early 2000s.

While at times questioning the narrative that homosexuality was always hidden in the armed forces, this exhibit does not shy away from the darker elements of these stories. One of the exhibit’s strengths lies in its collection of firsthand accounts, with various letters, medical reports and military police interrogation transcripts on display for people to see and read, often displayed near photos of their authors or subjects. In fact, the entire exhibition was made using over 100 interviews with past and present LGBTI members of the ADF. These elements of *Serving in silence?*, especially when joined with the projected images of these service personnel put together by the [Gay and Lesbian Archives](#), help drive home the reality of these accounts.



Members of the Defence Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex Information Service, Sydney Mardi Gras, 2013. Photograph by Vick Gwyn, courtesy of the Australian War Memorial.

The exhibit’s other great strength is its attempts to engage its audience to investigate further. As soon as you finish the exhibition, you are greeted with a bookcase filled with further reading on sexuality in Australia, all of which can be borrowed from the City Library. Even when you sit down for a rest in front of the displays there are copies of the *ADF Staff LGBTI Guide* and the *Air Force Diversity Handbook* on display for you to browse. These are not only displays showing how and when certain attitudes in the ADF changed but also further reading for visitors about sexuality and



gender, discussing such topics as the difference between gender identity and biological sex. There is even a copy of Noah Riseman's journal article [\*Outmanoeuvring Defence: The Australian Debates over Gay and Lesbian Military Service, 1992\*](#) which offers a more in depth discussion on the later period of the exhibit than could be displayed in the small number of panels.

The exhibit does well in discussing both the sadder parts of this history and the achievements of LGBTI members, as well as highlighting current inequalities in the ADF, such as the ban on HIV positive people enlisting and the difficulties for transgender members to access surgery. However, while *Serving in silence?* does a brilliant job of giving an equal amount of space between gay and lesbian stories, the exhibit would have benefited greatly from more stories of LGBTI people of colour, of which it is severely lacking.

As this exhibit comes hot on the heels of the legalisation of Same Sex Marriage in Australia, right in the middle of the [Midsumma Festival](#) in Melbourne and indeed only days after the first same sex weddings, it reminds us all how important and hard fought such victories and celebrations are. The stories of these men and women are important for all Australians, especially younger LGBTI Australians, as they teach us our own history, a history of those who suffered and fought injustice in the past so that we can celebrate equality today. However, it also shows us that we still have some way to go.

*Serving in silence? Australian military service since World War II* is on display in The Gallery at City Library from January 11 to February 3 2018 and is a free event. Following this it will be moving to [Sydney](#), where it will be on display at the TAP Gallery, Surry Hills, from 27 February to 4 March 2018.



*Mitchell Naughton has recently completed a Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in History and has research interests in both criminal and queer history. His thesis "The Royal Highwaymen" explored highway robbery committed by soldiers in eighteenth-*



*century London and he has also recently completed research on behalf of the National Trust of Australia into female prisoners at Melbourne Gaol during the late nineteenth-century.*

*You can follow him on Twitter: @mitch\_naughton*

This entry was posted in [Event review](#). Bookmark the [permalink](#).

**Australian Women's History Network**