

# Fifty Years of Visibility!

## Key Messages

In the 2021 Mardi Gras Parade, the 78ers contingent (those in the first Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras and related protests in 1978) will celebrate **Fifty Years of LGBTIQ+ Visibility** by highlighting key events from 1969, 1970 and 1971.

The first Australian **activist LGBTIQ+ organisations** were founded in:

- 1969 – Australasian Lesbian Movement (ALM)
- June 1969 – ACT Homosexual Law Reform Society
- July 1970 – Campaign Against Moral Persecution (CAMP Inc.).

Key members of **ALM** and **CAMP Inc.** “came out” and were interviewed on TV and in the press in 1970. They included John Ware, Michael Cass and Christabel Poll of CAMP Inc. and the ALM’s Phyllis Papps and Francesca Curtis.

The first **AGM** of **CAMP Inc.** was chaired by **Dr Ian Black** on 9 January 1971.

The first gay demonstration in Australia was on **8 October 1971**.

2021 is the **40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary** of the **first Summer Mardi Gras**.

Phyllis Papps and Francesca Curtis of ALM are the subjects of a documentary ***Why Did She Have To Tell The World?***, screening during the Mardi Gras Film Festival on 3 March 2021 and on ABC TV on Sunday March 14 at 8pm AEDT.

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## LGBTQI+ Visibility – 1969 to 1971

Australia's first "coming out" in the media was the television appearance of the **Australasian Lesbian Movement's Francesca Curtis** on Channel 9's Melbourne-based current affairs program, *The Bailey File*, in May 1970.

The Australasian Lesbian Movement (ALM) (initially named the Daughters of Bilitis after the US group, was formed in Melbourne in 1969. At first ALM was a closed lesbian support group but they had spokeswomen who commented on issues related to lesbians.

In July 1970, following the reports of the first Gay Pride March in New York, **John Ware** and **Christabel Poll** invited a few people to discuss forming a group of "learned 'homosexuals to counter discriminatory stereotypes in the media". They decided to form Sydney's **Campaign Against Moral Persecution**, or **CAMP Inc.**, the first openly homosexual support and activist organisation in Australia.

After letters were sent to various newspapers advising of the formation of **CAMP Inc.**, **John Ware** was interviewed in *The Australian* on 10 September 1970.

On Saturday 19 September 1970, an article, *Couples*, appeared in the magazine section of *The Australian*. In the article, Janet Hawley interviewed **John Ware**, his partner **Michael Cass** and **Christabel Poll**. This was followed by an interview with **John Ware** and **Michael Cass** on ABC-TV's *This Day Tonight* two days later.

Then, on 6 October 1970, **ALM's Phyllis Papps** and **Francesca Curtis** were interviewed on ABC-TV *This Day Tonight*. This interview, and Francesca's earlier appearance on *The Bailey File*, was based on how the women came to terms with being a lesbian and the public image of lesbians. This is now the subject of the documentary *Why Did She Have To Tell The World?*, screening during the Mardi Gras 2021 Film Festival on 3 March and on ABC TV on Sunday March 14 at 8.00pm AEDT.

However, it was **John and Christabel's** appearance in *Couples* that led to the establishment of a series of CAMP groups across Australia and the impetus for a broader homosexual rights movement.

Rather than being just the anniversary of one organisation, however, the article is now viewed as the symbolic start of the gay and lesbian movement, and the beginning of fifty years of LGBTQ visibility and achievement across Australia.

Before this, there were really no publicly self-declared homosexuals or homosexual organisations, though there were, necessarily closeted, social groups. Within twelve months, there were CAMP groups in Melbourne, Adelaide, Brisbane, Perth, and eventually in Canberra (all in a loose federation). Campus groups, independent of CAMP, were established at Sydney University and the University of NSW; and a Gay Liberation sub-group that had formed within CAMP broke away in January 1972 to form Sydney Gay Liberation. Similar Gay Liberation groups then formed in other capitals.

It is not just that these were brave people for the time but that these events mark the beginnings of LGBTQ visibility in Australia. And with the following fifty years of achievement, they are worthy of commemoration.

In the Parade this year, the **Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras 78ers Committee** will celebrate **Fifty Years of LGBTQI+ Visibility** and is highlighting key events from 1969, 1970 and 1971. In 2022, the 78ers Committee will celebrate key events from 1972 in the Parade.

This year is also the **40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the first Summer Mardi Gras**, in February 1981. The first three Mardi Gras Parades were held in late June on the Stonewall uprising anniversary.

## Timeline – 1969 to 1971

- **1969** – Daughters of Bilitis, soon re-named the **Australasian Lesbian Movement (ALM)**, formed in Melbourne.
- **June 1969** – **ACT Homosexual Law Reform Society** formed.
- **May 1970** – first "coming out" in the media, **Francesca Curtis** of **ALM** on Channel 9's Melbourne-based current affairs program, *The Bailey File*.
- **July 1970** – following the reports of the first Gay Pride March in New York, **John Ware** and **Christabel Poll** invite a small group to discuss forming a group of "learned 'homosexuals to counter discriminatory stereotypes in the media" – **Campaign Against Moral Persecution**, or **CAMP Inc.**
- **September 1970** – letter sent to various newspapers advising the formation of **CAMP Inc.**, only *Nation* and the Brisbane *Courier Mail* print it.
- **10 September 1970** – **John Ware** interviewed in *The Australian* about **CAMP Inc.**
- **19 September 1970** – **John Ware**, his partner **Michael Cass** and **Christabel Poll** of **CAMP Inc.** interviewed in *Couples* article in magazine section of *The Australian*.
- **21 September 1970** – **John Ware** and **Michael Cass**, of **CAMP Inc.**, interviewed on ABC-TV's *This Day Tonight*.
- **6 October 1970** – **Phyllis Papps** and **Francesca Curtis** of **ALM** interviewed on ABC-TV *This Day Tonight*.
- **21 November 1970** – **John Ware** and **Christabel Poll** invite a selected group to a BBQ and they decide that **CAMP Inc.** will be a larger group than originally planned.
- **December 1970** – first issue of the magazine **CAMP Ink** published.
- **9 January 1971** – **first AGM** of **CAMP Inc.** held in the Anglican Church hall in Balmain, chaired by **Dr Ian Black**.
- **21 February 1971** – **Society 5** (CAMP Vic) forms in **Melbourne** and within months, **CAMP** groups form in Adelaide, Brisbane, Perth and Canberra. **CAMP Inc.** becomes **CAMP NSW**.
- **22 March 1971** – **Dr Ian Black** interviewed on Anne Deveson's *Newsmakers* program on 2GB.
- **April 1971** – first general meeting of **CAMPus CAMP** at **Sydney University**.
- **May 1971** – formation of **CAMPus CAMP** at **UNSW**.
- **July 1971** – **Gay Liberation** group forms within **CAMP NSW**.
- **8 October 1971** – 70 attend the **CAMP NSW** called first gay demonstration in Australia outside the NSW Liberal Party headquarters, against the pre-selection challenge by Jim Cameron to sitting Federal Attorney-General Tom Hughes, who had proposed homosexual law reform.
- **20 October 1971** – **Sydney University** and **UNSW CAMPus CAMPs** hold Sex-Lib forums.

## Placard Slogans – 2021

**50 years of VISIBILITY** – the 78ers contingent in the Mardi Gras Parade will use this placard in 2021 and each year as we celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the 1972 events in 2022, of the 1973 events in 2023 and so on.

**1969 ALM Melbourne** – the Australasian Lesbian Movement was formed in Melbourne.

**1969 HLRS Canberra** – the Homosexual Law Reform Society was formed in Canberra.

**1970 CAMP Inc. Sydney** – the Campaign Against Moral Persecution (CAMP Inc.) was formed in June 1970 in Sydney.

**1970 John Ware Christabel Poll CAMP Inc.** – CAMP Inc. was formed by John Ware and Christabel Poll in June 1970. Christabel and John, with his partner Michael Cass, were interviewed in *Couples* article in magazine section of *The Australian* on 19 September 1970. John and Michael were then interviewed on ABC TV on 21 September.

**1970 Phyllis Papps Francesca Curtis ALM** – in May 1970 Francesca Curtis was the first to come out in the media. Phyllis and Francesca were also interviewed on ABC TV on 6 October 1970. They were prominent members of ALM.

**1970 CAMP Ink Magazine** – in December 1970 the first issue of the magazine *CAMP Ink* was published.

**1971 CAMP All States** – 21 February 1971 – Society 5 (CAMP Vic) forms in Melbourne and within months, CAMP groups form in Adelaide, Brisbane, Perth and Canberra. CAMP Inc. becomes CAMP NSW.

**1971 FIRST GAY PROTEST IN AUSTRALIA** – 8 October 1971 – 70 attend the CAMP NSW called first gay demonstration in Australia outside the NSW Liberal Party headquarters, against the pre-selection challenge by Jim Cameron to sitting Federal Attorney-General Tom Hughes, who had proposed homosexual law reform.

**CAMP and Gay Liberation symbols**

**Stop Police Attacks on Women, Gays and Blacks** – Fabric banner with a variant of our most commonly chanted slogan. 78ers almost always chant: **Stop Police Attacks on Gays, Women and Blacks.**

**Out of the Bars and onto the Streets** – Fabric banner with our other common chant of the 1970s.

## 78ers and the first Mardi Gras

[Mardi Gras History](#)

[The original 1978 Mardi Gras marchers](#)

[Timeline \(mardigras.org.au\)](#)

[Who are the 78ers? — First mardi gras](#)

[What happened at the first Mardi Gras? — First mardi gras \(78ers.org.au\)](#)