

**‘Just another start to the denigration of Anzac Day’: Evolving Commemorations of  
Australian LGBTI Military Service**

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*This article examines key historical moments in 1982, 1996, 2013 and 2015 when currently or formerly serving gay military personnel have publically asserted their membership in Australia’s Anzac legend and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) community. Through using the public spaces of Anzac Day and Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras, LGBTI service organisations have strategically positioned gay service personnel as past, present or future members of Australia’s Defence and LGBTI communities. Their public demonstrations have challenged Australians’ constructs of gay men’s masculinity, the Anzac legend, digger mythology and the Australian Defence Force.*

*The Gender Perspectives on Civil-Military Relations in Changing Security Environment*

project states that there is a,

gendered logic of the military, which celebrate male power, particularly the male warrior, and devalue all things feminine, produce the kind of masculinities and femininities that are asserted in national gender hierarchies. The logic of the armed forces affirms a “right” kind of nationhood, gendered citizenship and gendered division of labour.<sup>1</sup>

Australian sociologists such as Jyonah Jericho, Katerina Agostino and Ben Wadham similarly argue that the Australian Defence Force (ADF) has always been a hegemonic masculine

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<sup>1</sup> ‘Objectives and Methods’, *GENCIMIL – Gender Perspectives on Civil-Military Relations in Changing Security Environment*, online, <http://blogs.helsinki.fi/civmil/objectives-and-methods>, (accessed 30 June 2015). See also Teemu Tallberg and Johanna Valenius, ‘Men, Militaries and Civilian Societies in Interaction’, *norma: Nordic Journal for Masculinity Studies* 3, no. 2 (2008): 85–98.

institution, with power structures and traditions favouring martial masculinity over traits associated with femininity.<sup>2</sup> Since the 1980s and early 1990s, the ADF has undergone significant social change to integrate women, lesbians, gays, bisexuals and since 2010 transgender and intersex personnel.<sup>3</sup> Even so, Wadham argues that the ADF still reflects hegemonic (white) masculine values which ‘are re-presented back to Australian Society on ANZAC Day, in our history curricula and, in an overriding way, shaping our versions of citizenship and national identity’.<sup>4</sup> Wadham’s allusion to the Anzac legend reflects Anzac’s significance not only to Australia’s national identity, but also to the contemporary ADF. Indeed, as James Brown and former Chief of Army General David Morrison argue, even current service personnel struggle with the Anzac mythology’s hold over the ADF’s public image.<sup>5</sup>

The presence of current and former service personnel who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or intersex (LGBTI) – as well as women more generally – contest the gendered and heterosexist structures of the ADF and Anzac legend. Gay men especially confront stereotypes of what it is to be ‘masculine’ and destabilise constructs of diggers and

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<sup>2</sup> Jyonah Jericho, ‘Hegemonic Masculinity in the Australian Defence Force – the Exclusion of Women from Combat Service as State Policy, 1973–2013’ (PhD thesis, University of Sydney, 2015); Ben Wadham, ‘Mogan Hunts and Pig Nights: Military Masculinities and the Making of the Arms-Corps Soldier’, paper presented at the The Australian Sociological Association Conference, La Trobe University, Melbourne, 2004, accessed via Flinders University digital repository; Katerina Agostino, ‘Men, Identity and Military Culture’, in *Male Trouble: Looking at Australian Masculinities*, eds Stephen Tomsen and Mike Donaldson (Melbourne: Pluto Press, 2003), 108–31.

<sup>3</sup> See Hugh Smith, ‘The Dynamics of Social Change and the Australian Defence Force’, *Armed Forces & Society* 21, no. 4 (1995): 531–51.

<sup>4</sup> Ben Wadham, ‘Brotherhood’, *Australian Feminist Studies* 28, no. 76 (2013): 216.

<sup>5</sup> See James Brown, *Anzac’s Long Shadow: The Cost of Our National Obsession* (Melbourne: Redback 4, 2014); Lieutenant General David Morrison, ‘Address by the Chief of Army Lieutenant General David Morrison, AO at the United Nations International Women’s Day Conference, 8–9 March 2013’, online, <http://www.army.gov.au/Our-work/Speeches-and-transcripts/United-Nations-International-Womens-Day-Conference> (accessed 16 July 2015).

the Anzac legend. At the same time, gay defence members defy dominant constructs as camp, weak and feminine. Essentially, LGBTI service personnel, by seeking membership in both the Defence and LGBTI communities, challenge Australian society to reconceptualise the Anzac legend, LGBTI Australians and the ADF. This article explores the challenges posed by three LGBTI service organisations at three historical moments.<sup>6</sup> The Gay Ex Services Association (GESA) attempted to lay a wreath at Melbourne's Shrine of Remembrance on Anzac Day in 1982, only to be turned away. In 1996, notwithstanding some opposition within the ADF, gay, lesbian and bisexual servicemen and women marched in the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras for the first time as G-Force. In 2013, the Defence LGBTI Information Service (DEFGLIS) marched in the Mardi Gras in uniform. Whilst these groups were broadly interested in LGBTI issues, this article focuses primarily, though not exclusively, on gay servicemen because of the masculine nature of the ADF, Anzac legend and digger mythology. Through claiming membership of particular communities at these events, gay service personnel have been challenging Australians' understandings of masculinity, sexuality and the ADF.

### **(Re)shaping an Anzac legend**

Since the landing of the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps (ANZACs) at Gallipoli in 1915, a mythology has emerged about the prowess and masculinity of Australian 'diggers'. Graham Seal describes the First World War digger mythology as 'the stereotypical representation of the ideal Australian as a tall, tough, laconic, hard-drinking, hard-swearing, hard-gambling, independent, resourceful, anti-authoritarian, manual labouring, itinerant,

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<sup>6</sup> The term LGBTI encompasses the numerous sexual and gender identities that identify as not heterosexual or cisgender. It is a recent term and applies more so to DEFGLIS than to GESA, which was predominantly gay men with some lesbian membership, and G-Force, which represented gay men, lesbians and bisexuals.

white male'.<sup>7</sup> Though the Anzac legend has evolved over the past century, its fundamental premise is, as Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds write, 'In proving their manhood – brave, firm, loyal and steadfast – these men (so it was said) had proven our nationhood'.<sup>8</sup> This Anzac legend has contributed to how later servicemen constructed their identities and has become a benchmark against which current service personnel often (falsely) measure themselves.<sup>9</sup>

As historians such as Lake, Carina Donaldson and Carolyn Holbrook reveal, this Anzac legend has always been contested, and LGBTI actions since the 1980s happened amidst wider shifts in interpretations of the Anzac legend. There was a decline in Anzac Day attendance in the immediate post-Second World War period. In the 1960s and 1970s, the decline of Anzac Day attendances was complemented by criticism tied with the anti-Vietnam War movement. Around this era there were two significantly contested meanings attached to the Anzac legend. The first was a conservative vision of Anzac symbolising a strong white nation, baptised in war, born out of the traditions of the British Empire. The Returned Services League (RSL), the self-appointed protectors of the Anzac legend since the 1920s, was the main champion of this vision. The second was a critique of the Anzac legend as glorifying war, symbolising subservience to Great Britain and perpetuating myths of racial superiority that were unsuitable to modern Australia.<sup>10</sup>

Until the election of the Whitlam Labor Government in 1972, the Commonwealth government mostly acceded to the RSL's conservative interpretation of the Anzac legend. As

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<sup>7</sup> Graham Seal, *Inventing Anzac: The Digger and National Mythology* (Brisbane: University of Queensland Press in association with the API Network and Curtin University of Technology, 2004), 10.

<sup>8</sup> Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds, *What's Wrong with Anzac* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2010), 2.

<sup>9</sup> See Alistair Thomson, *Anzac Memories: Living with the Legend*, 2nd ed. (Melbourne: Monash University Publishing, 2013), 248; Brown, 90–94.

<sup>10</sup> Carolyn Holbrook, *Anzac: The Unauthorised Biography* (Sydney: NewSouth Publishing, 2014), 91–124; Carina Donaldson and Marilyn Lake, 'Whatever Happened to the Anti-War Movement?', in *What's Wrong with Anzac*, 71–93.

the Whitlam government offered a new vision of a progressive, multicultural Australia, two new historical narratives of the Anzac legend began to emerge. One placed a new emphasis on the servicemen (still men) themselves, recast as the victims of warmongering policymakers. Historians such as Bill Gammage and Patsy Adam-Smith fuelled this vision of the First World War diggers, laying the groundwork for a legend that could honour military servicepeople without glorifying war.<sup>11</sup> Christina Twomey argues that feminist critiques of Anzac Day in the late 1970s and early 1980s further contributed to the notion of servicemen being victims of war. Groups such as Women against Rape in War staged vocal demonstrations at Anzac Day marches in the 1980s. Whilst they were trying to draw attention to female victims of war, Twomey argues that an unintended consequence of their movement was to galvanise a counter-movement that framed servicemen as casualties of war trauma.<sup>12</sup> Thus by the 1990s, the Anzac legend continued to glorify martial masculinity, but also adopted the notion of war trauma shattering the diggers' masculinity. The nation must honour those who risked their manhood to protect the nation.

Another significant evolution of the Anzac legend that had its origins in the 1980s was a shift from commemorating only white, male diggers. Frank Bongiorno writes, 'When Anzac was a less inclusive tradition, those who were most responsible for policing its boundaries and regulating its rituals essentially courted – and often received – criticism from other citizens and groups'.<sup>13</sup> By the 1980s there was the global rise of what historian Jay Winter describes as 'hyphen' groups (i.e. Jewish-Americans, African-Americans) asserting distinct positions within national war narratives. In Australia such pushes came primarily

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<sup>11</sup> Donaldson and Lake, 90–91; Holbrook, 124–42.

<sup>12</sup> Christina Twomey, 'Trauma and the Reinvigoration Anzac: An Argument', *History Australia* 10, no. 3 (2013): 85–108.

<sup>13</sup> Frank Bongiorno, 'Anzac and the Politics of Inclusion', in *Nation, Memory and Great War Commemoration Mobilizing the Past in Europe, Australia and New Zealand*, eds Shanti Sumartojo and Ben Wellings (Oxford: Peter Lang AG, 2014), 86.

from ethnic groups who had immigrated post-Second World War and from Indigenous Australians.<sup>14</sup> By the 1990s these groups accepted Anzac Day's renewed prominence as a national day and wanted to prove their Australianness through claiming a part of the Anzac legend. For Indigenous Australians in particular, given their general opposition to Australia Day as a day marking their dispossession, Anzac Day represented an opportunity to assert their inclusion in Australia's national identity. Mark McKenna argues that it was the 1988 Bicentenary protests that shifted political interest back to Anzac Day as Australia's national day.<sup>15</sup>

Gay and lesbian military service potentially fit in several of these 1980s–90s shifts in the Anzac legend. They, too, wanted to be honoured as individual servicemen and women who had bravely served their country. Because regulations barred them from open service until 1992, they were victims of military policymakers. They fit the 'hyphen' paradigm as a group asserting its distinctness within the national identity. Yet gay and lesbian service members wanted recognition not only in the Anzac legend. Cultural studies scholar Fiona Nicoll argues that because sexuality is only one aspect of an individual's identity, there is a 'danger of an identity-politics that subordinates other axes of identification to sexual preference'.<sup>16</sup> Since the early 1980s, LGBTI service groups would use different spaces — namely Anzac Day and the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras — to claim dual membership in both the LGBTI *and* Defence communities.

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<sup>14</sup> Jay Winter, *Remembering War: The Great War between Memory and History in the Twentieth Century* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006), 35–36; Bruce Scates, *A Place to Remember: A History of the Shrine of Remembrance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 238–40; Bongiorno, 81–97.

<sup>15</sup> Mark McKenna, 'Anzac Day: How Did It Become Australia's National Day?', in *What's Wrong with Anzac?*, 110–34.

<sup>16</sup> Fiona Nicoll, *From Diggers to Drag Queens: Configurations of Australian National Identity* (Sydney: Pluto Press Australia, 2001), 210.

## GESA Challenges Anzac

In early 1982, the Commonwealth Government was preparing new legislation to create a uniform military code across all three services and to bring ADF personnel under the jurisdiction of the Australian Capital Territory *Criminal Code*. The press reported that the legislation, which eventually became the *Defence Forces Discipline Act*, would also have a more liberal approach to homosexuals.<sup>17</sup> Within days the Department of Defence clarified that private homosexual acts off base would still be prohibited.<sup>18</sup> The short-lived proposal divided ex-service organisations, with RSL National President Sir William Keys stating, ‘What you do in your private life, in a private area is your own affair – providing that it doesn’t become the subject of public comment and doesn’t affect your standard of work in the service’.<sup>19</sup> Outspoken Victorian RSL President Bruce Ruxton drew more attention when he stated, ‘I am appalled, shocked and disappointed that this should happen’.<sup>20</sup>

One night in March or April 1982, a group of five gay ex-Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) servicemen were discussing Ruxton’s comments. Max Campbell recalls,

I just said fairly innocently, ‘Why don’t we form some sort of group, association or something that we can get a little bit political in that we’ll maybe do a wreath on Anzac Day or be prepared to be interviewed and that if someone asks?’<sup>21</sup>

Out of this statement the Gay Ex Services Association (GESA) was born. Almost all GESA members have passed away, so seventy-three year old Max Campbell’s oral history testimony provides crucial insights into the group. GESA placed announcements in the mainstream and gay press, with one announcement stating: ‘it is intended to discuss the proposed aims of – a

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<sup>17</sup> ‘Department “will not accept” homosexual behaviour’, *The Canberra Times*, 21 January 1982, 11; ‘New code to govern homosexuals in the forces’, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 20 January 1982.

<sup>18</sup> ‘Defence Dept Fiddles Law’, *Klick!* (Melbourne), March 1982, 5; ‘Don’t They Know? Defence Department Confusion over Status of Gays’, *The Star* (Sydney), 12 February 1982, 2, 7.

<sup>19</sup> ‘New forces code turns blind eye to off-base sex’, *Campaign*, February 1982, 6.

<sup>20</sup> ‘Ruxton Attacks Service Reforms’, *Gay Community News*, March 1982, 8.

<sup>21</sup> Max Campbell, interview with Noah Riseman, 13 March 2015, South Kingsville, VIC.

Social Group, Counselling, First Line Support, Back-up Support, Long Term Pressure Group'.<sup>22</sup> Ultimately only about eight to twelve people joined GESA (reports conflict), mostly gay men but also two lesbians. These young men and women had served in Vietnam or in Australia during the 1960s and 1970s. The organisation mainly functioned as a social group, with monthly meet-ups in the pub.<sup>23</sup>

GESA formed specifically to lay a wreath at Melbourne's Shrine of Remembrance on Anzac Day 1982 to assert gays and lesbians' inclusion within the Anzac legend. Gays and lesbians also fought in the services, and GESA members believed the Anzac legend should be flexible, progressive and honest enough to allow their experiences to be included within its boundaries. As Graham Seal argues, 'The power of Anzac is its ability to connect the potent notions of community, nation and war. It is a myth, but it is a necessary myth with which all Australians are required to have a relationship, positive or negative'.<sup>24</sup> Positioning gays and lesbians as part of the Anzac legend represented a proclamation of their Australianness.<sup>25</sup> GESA's focus was primarily on remembrance, as the ribbon accompanying their wreath stated: 'For all our brothers and sisters who died during the wars. Gay Ex-Servicemen's Association'.<sup>26</sup>

Laying the wreath did not go smoothly. Five GESA men representing all three services arrived at the Shrine just before the public wreath-laying at 12:30pm. It was a staged event with a photographer from the gay monthly magazine *City Rhythm* present. The five men were, Max Campbell describes, noticeably gay because of their manner of dress: one in

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<sup>22</sup> 'GESA', *City Rhythm* (Melbourne), March 1982, 3; 'Gay Ex-Services Association', *Klick!* (Melbourne), April 1982, 7.

<sup>23</sup> From June 1982 – October/November 1985 the 'City Rhythm's Guide to Gay Melbourne...And Beyond' listed GESA's monthly meet-ups at the pub. See *City Rhythm* (Melbourne).

<sup>24</sup> Seal, vii.

<sup>25</sup> Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 80.

<sup>26</sup> 'RSL boss slights Ex-servicemen', *Campaign*, June 1982, 6.



leather, others in jeans and one known as Teddy Bear Terry carrying a teddy bear in his back pocket. As the five men climbed the steps to the forecourt, Bruce Ruxton charged across and shouted ‘Stop those men!’ Ruxton and the Shrine commissionaire refused to let the men enter and lay the wreath, even though they had previously received verbal undertakings from the RSL’s deputy secretary that they could lay a wreath at the public time. The commissionaire summoned the police, who escorted the men away.<sup>27</sup>

Bruce Ruxton had been a cook in the Army in the Second World War, serving in the south Pacific and never rising above the rank of private. Like many other high-profile RSL leaders, Ruxton had not been a frontline soldier; yet Ruxton was different from most of the RSL hierarchy because he was not an officer.<sup>28</sup> Ruxton represented what Fiona Nicoll describes as a conservative digger-nationalist who ‘posited “the digger” as the single true representative of the national interest. This was emphatically opposed to the alternative formulation of “diggers” as a category that could accommodate multiplicity and difference’.<sup>29</sup> Ruxton used his position as a veteran both to perpetuate a particular version of war memory, but also to claim a special right, as a citizen who served his country, to comment on society. As Jay Winter, Alistair Thomson and Bruce Scates argue, those in positions of power — like the presidency of the RSL — construct war narratives that legitimise their authority. Their commemorations can exclude and marginalise those who do not fit their narratives.<sup>30</sup> For Ruxton, gay men simply did not fit the category of ‘digger’, as he expressed in the media, ‘I don’t know where all these gays and poofers have come from. I don’t remember one single

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<sup>27</sup> ‘RSL Head Provokes Shrine Skirmish’, *City Rhythm* (Melbourne), June 1982, 13–15; Max Campbell interview.

<sup>28</sup> Anne Blair, *Ruxton: A Biography* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2004).

<sup>29</sup> Nicoll, 100.

<sup>30</sup> Stephen Garton, *The Cost of War: Australians Return* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1996), 53; Winter, *Remembering War*, 277; Thomson, 247; Scates, 9.

poofter from WWII'.<sup>31</sup> Historians such as Yorick Smaal and Graham Willett have found clear evidence of gay servicemen and subcultures in the Second World War.<sup>32</sup> Yet, as Thomson argues,

While the specific contents of the Anzac narrative and archetype have changed over time and in different circumstances, the legend has always worked to construct a 'typical Anzac' or a 'genuine digger' and, in turn, to render aberrant experiences and identities as alien, atypical and un-Australian.<sup>33</sup>

Ruxton's actions and statements condemned all homosexuals and therefore they *could not* be part of the digger mythology.

GESA's wreath-laying represented a direct challenge not only to Ruxton, but also more widely to the Anzac legend to include gays and lesbians. Seal argues that 'Rightly or wrongly, desirably or not, we have invented Anzac in our own image and continue to define our nation by its projections'.<sup>34</sup> From Ruxton's perspective, the Anzac legend — and by extension Australian nationhood — could not encompass gays and lesbians. Ruxton even commented,

I don't mind poofers in the march but they must march with their units. We didn't want them to lay a wreath because we didn't want to have anything to do with them. We certainly don't recognise them and they are just another start to the denigration of Anzac Day.<sup>35</sup>

Ruxton also deemed gays incompatible with digger masculinity when he remarked, 'You know as well as I do, they [gay soldiers] couldn't hide themselves. The men would get on to

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<sup>31</sup> 'RSL Rejects Gay Wreath', *Klick!* (Melbourne), May 1982, 5. See also Alison Thorne and Noel Maloney, 'Anzac Day: Women, Gays Can't Lay Wreaths', *Gay Community News* (Sydney), May 1982, 5.

<sup>32</sup> Yorick Smaal, *Sex, Soldiers and the South Pacific, 1939–45: Queer Identities in Australia in the Second World War* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015); Yorick Smaal and Graham Willett, 'Eliminate the "Females": The New Guinea Affair and Medical Approaches to Homosexuality in the Australian Army in the Second World War', in *The Pacific War: Aftermaths, Remembrance and Culture*, eds Christina Twomey and Ernest Koh (Abingdon: Routledge, 2015), 233–50.

<sup>33</sup> Thomson, 248.

<sup>34</sup> Seal, 170.

<sup>35</sup> Mary-Louise O'Callaghan, 'Ban on homosexuals' wreath bid', *The Age*, 26 April 1982, 3.

it straight away'.<sup>36</sup> Ruxton was constructing diggers as representing a particular hegemonic masculinity, which could not account for homosexuals, whom he considered weak, feminine, cowardly and incapable of hiding their sexuality.<sup>37</sup> Mark McKenna argues that by 1990, dominant constructs of the diggers were of 'brave boys loyal to their mates, whose virtues the nation might now emulate'.<sup>38</sup> GESA, as homosexuals, could not be brave or virtuous and should not be emulated – hence the need to exclude them.

Ruxton not only positioned GESA outside the imagined community of ex-servicemen and women, but he also grouped them with the Women against Rape in War protesters as part of 'a concerted effort by anti-heritage groups to destroy the march'.<sup>39</sup> Women against Rape in War had organised a small wreath-laying in Melbourne in 1979 and drew over 600 protesters in Canberra in 1981. They would continue to protest Anzac Days in other cities throughout the 1980s.<sup>40</sup> The few historians who have written about the GESA incident also group them with Women against Rape in War as part of a movement in the 1980s to challenge Anzac Day's glorification of war. Yet there is a clear distinction between these groups; GESA was challenging the *exclusivity* of the Anzac legend rather than challenging the day itself. Former GESA president Mike Jarmyn commented in the press: 'We are not a political extremist group bent on the degradation of the Anzac Day tradition. We simply wish to publicly recognise the fact that gay people also gave their lives in war. We are not playing politics'.<sup>41</sup> Max Campbell's recollections also suggest that there was no objection to Anzac Day commemorations in general. Before GESA he marched at least once as an ex-serviceman.

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<sup>36</sup> Alison Thorne and Noel Maloney, 'Anzac Day: Women, Gays Can't Lay Wreaths', *Gay Community News* (Sydney), May 1982, 5.

<sup>37</sup> See Raewyn Connell, *Masculinities*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2005), 143–63.

<sup>38</sup> McKenna, 121.

<sup>39</sup> 'RSL president sparks Anzac row', *Campaign*, May 1982, 5.

<sup>40</sup> Twomey, 98–106; McKenna, 117–18; Holbrook, 120–21; Scates, 244–47.

<sup>41</sup> 'Ruxton's ruckus at Shrine', *Klick!* (Melbourne), May 1982, 33. See also 'RSL Head Provokes Shrine Skirmish', 14–15.

Though he stopped attending marches after GESA, he would continue to watch the march every year on television.<sup>42</sup>

GESA continued its monthly meetings after the wreath-laying incident and the following year had to decide whether to attempt to lay another wreath. Four of the original five did not want to risk rejection again, but Teddy Bear Terry agreed to accompany Max Campbell to lay a private wreath. Campbell this time attracted the eye of Bruce Ruxton; he recalls:

And he [a constable] started to take a bit of notice, so we just talked amicably for a little while longer, he went back and reported to Bruce. And, because I had established every right to be there and to, you know, everything, and oh, if looks could kill Bruce Ruxton would be a murderer. [laughs] But I waited to the appointed time, I checked that no one was coming or going, and off I went with no problem whatsoever. I just walked in and I spent my moment and walked out, walked away.<sup>43</sup>

Campbell's wreath-laying did not attract the same media attention as 1982, partly because the Women against Rape and War protests overshadowed it, but more so because it did not become a public incident.<sup>44</sup>

In 1984, Max Campbell laid the final GESA wreath. Again Shrine commissioners (though not Ruxton) turned Campbell away. A reporter was nearby and asked Campbell what was happening and he calmly explained that he was being turned away for being gay. The journalist contacted Shrine staff and later in the day rang Campbell to say, 'I've actually had a conversation with the Chairman of the Board of Trustees and he said that if you could, if you're at the Shrine at this time... You would be more than welcome to lay your wreath'.<sup>45</sup> The incident did not receive coverage in the gay press and had a brief mention in the *Sydney*

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<sup>42</sup> Max Campbell interview.

<sup>43</sup> Max Campbell interview.

<sup>44</sup> See 'Gays Lay Wreath', *Outrage*, May 1983, 8; 'Showdown at the Shrine: Violent Arrests Mark Anzac Day Protests in Sydney and Melbourne', *Outrage*, May 1983, 8–9; 'Anzac Day', *Campaign*, May 1983, 10–11.

<sup>45</sup> Max Campbell interview.

*Morning Herald*, with the Shrine Chairman, Wing Commander Peter Isaacson, stating, ‘The association [GESA] was allowed to lay a wreath last year and should have been allowed this year’.<sup>46</sup> Isaacson’s position was more enlightened than Ruxton’s and acknowledged the right of any citizen – even gays – to commemorate the fallen. This did not necessarily mark a reconceptualisation of the Anzac legend or homosexuality, but it did open up new possibilities for the future. GESA, however, disbanded sometime after Anzac Day 1984 due to lack of continuing interest among its members to continue the wreath-layings and monthly meet-ups.

### **G-Force Enters the Gay Community**

Attitudes towards homosexuality in Australia grew more tolerant through the 1980s and early 1990s. In November 1992, the Commonwealth government repealed the ban on gays, lesbians and bisexuals serving in the ADF. While gay and lesbian groups welcomed this move, military reform had never been a significant activist cause. Instead, the reforms came about after a dismissed lesbian sailor challenged the ban in the Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission (HREOC), sparking almost two years of debates involving the HREOC, ADF and the Keating Labor government.<sup>47</sup> There was still uncertainty over how gays and lesbians would be treated, so in 1994 RAAF Sergeant David Mitchell — who had recently had a traumatic coming out experience — founded G-Force. G-Force was primarily meant to be for support, social meet-ups and advocacy for lesbians, gays and bisexuals in the ADF. By 1996 they had about thirty-five members.<sup>48</sup> One key difference from GESA was

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<sup>46</sup> Greg Roberts, ‘Old soldiers parade, but it’s a day of protest for some’, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 26 April 1984, 3.

<sup>47</sup> Noah Riseman, ‘Outmanoeuvring Defence: The Australian Debates over Gay and Lesbian Military Service, 1992’, *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 61, no. 4 (2015): 562–75.

<sup>48</sup> David Mitchell, interview with Noah Riseman, 10 July 2014, Brisbane; ‘Fighting on a Different Front’, *Campaign*, March 1996, 36–37; Peter O’Shea, ‘A force within a force’, *Capital Q* (Sydney), 19 January 1996, 4.

that its focus was not on the past and commemorations, but rather on the present conditions of gay, lesbian and bisexual service personnel. This focus on the present would drive the group's decision to position itself within the gay and lesbian community, and the most obvious site for that was the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras rather than Anzac Day.

Had Mardi Gras history unfolded differently, an organisation like G-Force may not have been welcomed. The first Mardi Gras in 1978 was a gay rights protest that ended when the police attacked protesters. In 1980 there was a debate among Mardi Gras organisers over whether the event should continue as a protest or instead become a carnival celebration of the emerging gay community. This debate divided radicals and moderates, and ultimately the moderate argument won. From 1981 Mardi Gras moved to summer and to this day it continues primarily as a festival.<sup>49</sup> There are still political messages and radical participants, but that is not the primary focus. As such, there is no evidence of any overt hostility towards groups such as the ADF participating in the Mardi Gras. Scholars such as Graham Willett and Robert Reynolds write about this shift from a gay movement to a gay community in the 1980s, which Garry Wotherspoon argues,

serves its [Mardi Gras'] function of creating a sense of 'gay' identity for thousands of the homosexuality-inclined who may never otherwise come to Oxford Street and the ghetto, who may never be willing to take a political stance on the various issues, but who *do* identify with the sentiments behind the parade and so come out to see it, and even perhaps participate in it.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Several scholars have written about this schism, but some of the more insightful analysis comes from Graham Carbery, *A History of the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras* (Melbourne: Australian Lesbian and Gay Archives Inc., 1995), 27–36; Robert Reynolds, *What Happened to Gay Life?* (Sydney: NewSouth, 2007), 52–54; Graham Willett, *Living out Loud: A History of Gay and Lesbian Activism in Australia* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2000), 142–47.

<sup>50</sup> Garry Wotherspoon, *City of the Plain: History of a Gay Subculture* (Sydney: Hale and Iremonger, 1991), 210. See also Willett, 197–202; Robert Reynolds, 51–103.

By the 1990s the Mardi Gras was a tourist attraction bringing in \$25 million dollars. Attendance in 1993 and 1994 may have been around 500,000, and in 1994 the Australian Broadcasting Corporation televised the parade for the first time.<sup>51</sup>

In late August 1995, David Mitchell wrote to Brigadier Adrian D'Hage, Head of Defence Public Relations, to advise that G-Force intended to march in Mardi Gras in 1996. The letter emphasised:

We [G-Force] are becoming a significant group within the Australian gay community and as such we feel we have the right to express ourselves in celebration of this position. You said when I last spoke to you that you had no problem with this participation and that all you required was confirmation that the Mardi Gras Association and parade were for celebration of the gay community. They are more than this, they are to affirm the pride, joy, dignity and identity of our community and its people.<sup>52</sup>

Whereas GESA had positioned gay servicemen within the Anzac legend, G-Force was positioning them as members of Australia's gay community and in this sense wanted to challenge perceptions of gay people. Graham Carbery argues that the Mardi Gras had become a night to 'perform homosexuality' for spectators.<sup>53</sup> G-Force's participation would challenge constructs of gay men as flamboyant, effeminate and weak by highlighting the fact that members of the gay community were also members of the ADF. Mitchell also thought that other gay or lesbian Defence members watching the parade would learn about G-Force's existence as a support service.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Richard Waterhouse, *Private Pleasures, Public Leisure: A History of Australian Popular Culture since 1788* (Melbourne: Longman Australia Pty Ltd, 1995), 247; Gavin Harris, 'Perving on Perversity: A Nice Night in Front of the Tele', *Media International Australia* 78 (1995): 20; Ian Marsh and Larry Galbraith, 'The Political Impact of the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras', *Australian Journal of Political Science* 30, no. 2 (1995): 301.

<sup>52</sup> David Mitchell to Brigadier Adrian D'Hage, 30 August 1995, courtesy David Mitchell.

<sup>53</sup> Carbery, 25.

<sup>54</sup> David Mitchell interview.

Whilst D'Hage had initially supported Mitchell, by November 1995 the ADF position changed. The Vice Chief of Defence Force, Vice-Admiral Robert Walls, prohibited G-Force from participating in Mardi Gras. D'Hage stated to the media:

When we look at the charter of the Gay and Lesbian Mardis [sic] Gras Pty Ltd, it is not only a celebration of their sexuality, it is also a promotion...The difficulty we have with that is that it is very doubtful as to whether an official defence force float is an appropriate vehicle to promote a particular lifestyle. We would make the same decision if they were participating in a heterosexual parade.<sup>55</sup>

Mitchell responded by emphasising the community nature of Mardi Gras, 'Members of the group wanted to enter in the mardi gras [sic] next year to join with the rest of the gay community in the celebration'.<sup>56</sup> Whilst Defence argued that this was not discrimination, recollections of both Mitchell and D'Hage indicate that there was homophobia among some Defence top brass. D'Hage recalls Vice-Admiral Walls saying the float would go ahead 'Over my dead body'.<sup>57</sup> Mitchell recollects that a senior officer rang him, 'he said, "well if you go ahead with this I will ruin you", and I hung up on him'.<sup>58</sup>

What Mitchell and D'Hage understood was that the ADF legally could not stop G-Force members from marching in the parade so long as they did not do so in uniform. D'Hage indicates that he spent the next month working with the Chief of Defence Force, arguing, 'if you don't let this damn thing in you know your policy of treating people fair and equitable will be out the door. This will become, the non-approval will become the story'.<sup>59</sup> In January the press reported that the ADF agreed to support a G-Force float in the Mardi Gras as long as it was 'non-military' looking. Mitchell stated that the float was important to change Australians' perceptions of gay people,

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<sup>55</sup> 'Defence-force Mardi Gras float inappropriate: chiefs', *The Canberra Times*, 9 November 1995, 3.

<sup>56</sup> David Lague, 'Privates On Parade? No Thanks, Say Chiefs', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 8 November 1995, 1; 'Australian defence chiefs sink gay military float', Reuters, 8 November 1995.

<sup>57</sup> Adrian D'Hage, telephone interview with Noah Riseman, 24 April 2015.

<sup>58</sup> David Mitchell interview. Reports conflict over the identity of this officer.

<sup>59</sup> Adrian D'Hage interview.



It allows the community to see that gay men and lesbians are from all walks of life. The aim is to thrust our group into the spotlight to offer support and show gay and lesbian people in the forces that there are others.<sup>60</sup>

The RSL condemned the ADF's decision, with National President, Major General Digger James declaring, 'I see it really as defence force bosses proselytising on behalf of a sectional group'.<sup>61</sup> James' statement indicates that even with changes to ADF rules allowing lesbians, gays and bisexuals to serve, the guardians of the Anzac legend refused to include them in that tradition. Knowing that hostility existed, it is not surprising that G-Force targeted Mardi Gras, rather than Anzac Day, as the safe space to assert its members' identities both as Defence personnel and as gays or lesbians.

G-Force rallied between ten and twenty people to march, including both serving Defence personnel and their partners. The top of the float read: 'G-Force Gay and Lesbian Defence Force Members and Friends: Celebrating Community Serving Our Country'.<sup>62</sup> In the build-up to the parade, Mitchell did television interviews where he continued to express G-Force's aims to support serving gay and lesbian Defence members, as well as to challenge stereotypes of the gay and lesbian community. He recalls,

We were being able to be, to use that expression 'out and proud' in front of the world's media and people in our own country and say that well gay and lesbian people want to serve and serve our country the same as straight people.<sup>63</sup>

Mitchell's statement aligns with Ian Marsh and Larry Galbraith's description of the Mardi Gras as 'the broad "strategic" opinion-forming arm of the gay and lesbian movement.

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<sup>60</sup> Peter O'Shea, 'World First: Defence Forces approve Mardi Gras float', *Capital Q* (Sydney), 19 January 1996, 1. See also Peter O'Shea, 'Float Go-Ahead: "Yes Private, You Will Go to the Ball"', *Sydney Star Observer*, 19 January 1996, 1, 3.

<sup>61</sup> Christopher Zinn, 'Armed Forces' Gay Float Under Fire from Old Soldiers', *The Guardian*, 30 January 1996, 10.

<sup>62</sup> Photo in *Queensland Pride*, April 1996, 5.

<sup>63</sup> David Mitchell interview.

Through its visibility, Mardi Gras has attracted extensive publicity and has thus become a major, if undocumented, influence on public opinion'.<sup>64</sup> In both the gay and mainstream press, G-Force's participation in Mardi Gras received only minor mentions.<sup>65</sup> But still it positioned Defence personnel as members of Australia's gay community. G-Force did not march again in Mardi Gras, primarily due to the logistical and financial organisational challenges. G-Force operated until about 1998, when the financial and mental toll it took on Mitchell and other organisers led to its disbandment.<sup>66</sup>

### **DEFGLIS Challenges (In)tolerance**

Though G-Force was the first group of serving ADF personnel to march in the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras, it was not the last, nor the first to use the Mardi Gras as a public forum to challenge discrimination in the ADF. In 1993, in response to some homophobic remarks made by Bruce Ruxton, a group of straight ex-servicemen organised an effigy of Ruxton as the group Veterans Against Discrimination.<sup>67</sup> In 1999 a small group of approximately ten servicemen and their friends marched under a banner 'Defence in Unity'. The next major incarnation of an LGBTI service organisation formed in 2002 as DEFGLIS: the Defence Gay and Lesbian Information Service (renamed Defence LGBTI Information Service in 2011). DEFGLIS has organised a regular Defence contingent in Mardi Gras since

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<sup>64</sup> Marsh and Galbraith, 310.

<sup>65</sup> Mark Ray, 'Boys Just Wanna Have Fun', *Sunday Age*, 3 March 1996, 4; Stephen Dunne, 'Sure It Was Fun, But Let's Put Back The Old Brashness', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 4 March 1996, 2; photo in *Queensland Pride*, April 1996, 5; photo in *Capital Q* (Sydney), 8 March 1996, 21.

<sup>66</sup> David Mitchell interview.

<sup>67</sup> 'Veterans Against Discrimination', *At Ease!*, July-September 1993, 6; 'You're the Tops', *Sydney Star Observer*, 5 March 1993, 1; photos of Veterans Against Discrimination float in *Sydney Star Observer*, 5 March 1993, 19; *Capital Q* (Sydney), 5 March 1993, 10; Marsh and Galbraith, 311.

2008.<sup>68</sup> Whereas GESA focused on the past of gay and lesbian servicemen and women, and G-Force targeted the present, DEFGLIS has devoted its advocacy to LGBTI Defence members past, present and even future through working with Defence Force Recruiting. Though the ADF has made significant progress in its treatment of LGBTI service members since 1992, there are still significant challenges of bullying, homophobia, transphobia and heterosexism. Captain Dominic Lopez reports varying experiences of acceptance among gay and lesbian members of the Australian Army, ranging from those being fully out to those who remain closeted for fear of abuse. Even those who are open and comfortable in the ADF continue to see it as a masculine and heterosexist institution.<sup>69</sup> For these reasons, visibility at events such as Mardi Gras continues to play a significant role to challenge perceptions of LGBTI Defence members, as well as to promote further culture change within the ADF.

One of DEFGLIS' key moments was in 2013 when the Chief of Defence Force gave serving Defence members permission to march in Mardi Gras in uniform. Both DEFGLIS and Defence framed the decision as a celebration of diversity and inclusion, with DEFGLIS President Vince Chong stating: 'Mardi Gras is an important event celebrating sexual orientation and gender diversity... What this tells the international community is that the Australian Defence Force is an inclusive organisation'.<sup>70</sup> Defence internal documents and their public statement emphasised the importance of inclusion as 'a high priority for the organisation as it undergoes cultural change'.<sup>71</sup> The reference to 'cultural change' is

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<sup>68</sup> Karl Bryant, interview with Noah Riseman, 17 February 2016, Melbourne; 'LGBTI History in Defence,' *DEFGLIS*, <https://www.defglis.com.au/index.php/history> (accessed 1 July 2015); photo of Defence in Unity in *Sydney Star Observer*, 4 March 1999, 16.

<sup>69</sup> Captain Dominic Lopez, 'Brothers and Sisters in Arms: Experiences of Gay Soldiers in the Australian Army', *Australian Army Journal X*, no. 3 (2013): 213–25.

<sup>70</sup> 'Soldiers to march in uniform at Mardi Gras,' *ABC News*, 22 December 2012.

<sup>71</sup> Natalie O'Brien, 'ADF gets in uniform for Mardi Gras', *Sunday Age* (Melbourne), 23 December 2012, 6; 'Gays to march in uniform', *Sunday Herald Sun* (Melbourne), 23 December 2012, 1; 'Gay day for uniforms', *Sunday Telegraph* (Sydney), 23 December 2012, State section, 9; 'DEFGLIS ADMINISTRATIVE

important because the ADF was embroiled in several sexual abuse scandals that revealed misogyny across the institution. The most high-profile example was an incident when a male Australian Defence Force Academy cadet allegedly broadcast a sexual encounter with a female cadet over Skype without her knowledge.<sup>72</sup> Participating in an event associated with gay men – a social group traditionally viewed as feminine – was an opportunity for the ADF to soften its hypermasculine image. At the same time, gay men’s membership within the ADF continued to challenge constructs of gay men’s masculinity, displaying them as brave and strong. These aligning ADF and DEFGLIS agendas thus destabilised long-held constructs of masculinity and masculine institutions in Australia.

Like with the previous GESA and G-Force experiences, there was resistance to DEFGLIS marching in uniform. Letters to the editor show divided opinions on whether marching in uniform was appropriate.<sup>73</sup> Opposition also came from former and serving ADF members who invoked their disapproval on the grounds that Mardi Gras was a political event. Whilst the Mardi Gras abandoned its overt political messages in 1981, Dennis Altman argues that ‘in a society which is still ambivalent about homosexuality...the very visibility of Mardi

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INSTRUCTION NO 01/2012-AMENDMENT 1, PARADE -SYDNEY MARDI GRAS PARADE ON 02 MAR 13’, 21 February 2013 – is this DEFGLIS item a public document or printed matter – I found this document online – did you want to cite this, pls confirm

[http://www.defence.gov.au/foi/docs/disclosures/029\\_1314\\_documents.pdf](http://www.defence.gov.au/foi/docs/disclosures/029_1314_documents.pdf) YES PLEASE - THAT IS WHERE I ACCESSED IT AS WELL (VIA DEFENCE FOI)

<sup>72</sup> See Australian Human Rights Commission, *Review into the Treatment of Women in the Australian Defence Force: Phase 2 Report*, (Canberra 2012), <https://defencereview.humanrights.gov.au/report-review-treatment-women-australian-defence-force> (accessed 29 September 2016); *Report on the Review into the Treatment of Women at the Australian Defence Force Academy: Phase 1 of the Review into the Treatment of Women in the Australian Defence Force*, (Canberra 2011), <https://defencereview.humanrights.gov.au/report-review-treatment-women-australian-defence-force-academy> (accessed 29 September 2016); Gary Rumble, Melanie McKean, and Dennis Pearce, *Report of the Review of Allegations of Sexual and Other Abuse in Defence: Facing the Problems of the Past*, (Canberra 2011), <http://www.defence.gov.au/pathwaytochange/docs/DLAPiper/Volume1.pdf> (accessed 29 September 2016).

<sup>73</sup> ‘Soldiers join Mardi Gras ranks in dress uniform’, *Sunday Telegraph* (Sydney), 30 December 2012, State section, 78.

Gras is itself a political statement'.<sup>74</sup> Defence Instructions relating to 'Political activities of Defence personnel' explicitly prohibit individual Defence members from wearing their uniforms when engaging in political activities.<sup>75</sup> One Vietnam veteran complained to Chief of Defence Force General David Hurley, 'The uniform should not be used as a tool by any group, minority or otherwise, to bring attention to their cause'.<sup>76</sup>

The most vociferous complaint came from Army Major Bernard Gaynor, who argued that the Mardi Gras was not only political but was promoting a lifestyle that was un-Christian. By permitting LGBTI members to march in uniform, the ADF was violating its rules about engaging in unacceptable behaviour and offending his rights as a Christian.<sup>77</sup> Gaynor's formal complaint denounced the highly sexualised nature of Mardi Gras and condemned what Fiona Nicoll describes as 'the incorporation of military personnel in the Mardi Gras parade reconfigur[ing] digger-nationalism as an "impure sacred", simultaneously re-presenting the digger as sexual fetish and highlighting the military's dependence (both historically and in a contemporary context) upon homoerotic subjects and representation'.<sup>78</sup> Defence ultimately determined that while the Mardi Gras itself was not political per se, the

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<sup>74</sup> Dennis Altman, 'It Began by Accident', in *Mardi Gras! True Stories*, ed. Richard Wherrett (Melbourne: Viking, 1999), 9; Marsh and Galbraith, 308–09.

<sup>75</sup> Defence Instructions (General), PERS 21-1, AMDT no. 3, 'Political activities of Defence personnel', 4 October 2007, section 28, b, (2). \*\* Again worth citing an online document if possible? – AGAIN CAME FROM DEFENCE FOI

<sup>76</sup> Letter to General David Hurley, dated 17 April 2013. Can we ref this please – is it from here: [http://www.defence.gov.au/foi/docs/disclosures/029\\_1314\\_documents.pdf](http://www.defence.gov.au/foi/docs/disclosures/029_1314_documents.pdf) YES CORRECT - DEFENCE FOI

<sup>77</sup> Australian Army, Defence Command Support Training Centre, Defence Intelligence Training Centre, 'Harassment Brief – Maj B Gaynor against CDF', 17 April 2013. \*\* Is this the relevant online document to cite here - <http://www.judgments.fedcourt.gov.au/judgments/Judgments/fca/single/2015/2015fca1370> - please confirm \*\* ACTUALLY I AM PRETTY SURE I DOWNLOADED THIS DOCUMENT FROM GAYNOR'S BLOG... <http://bernardgaynor.com.au/defence-foi-documents-reveal-defence-comfortable-supporting-political-activity-christian-vilification-at-mardi-gras/>

<sup>78</sup> Nicoll, 201.

ADF needed to tread carefully so that members were not seen to be participating in political debates (i.e. marriage equality) which other Mardi Gras floats were advocating.

In contrast to the GESA and G-Force events, the DEFGLIS marchers received considerable media attention. One participant, Major Nick de Bont, emphasised Defence's commitment to diversity and the marchers' membership in both the LGBTI and Defence communities, 'I'm really proud of being in the defence force, and I just sort of wanted to send a message to people who are currently in the defence force or thinking about being in the defence force [that it] is inclusive'.<sup>79</sup> The Fairfax press described the 120 marchers as taking 'one small, uniformed step for military personnel but a giant leap for gay and lesbian recognition'.<sup>80</sup> DEFGLIS has continued to organise Defence members marching in uniform, and in 2015 media reports suggested that Defence and the NSW police received the loudest cheers.<sup>81</sup> In 2015, the Navy, Army and Air Force most senior warrant officers volunteered to lead the Defence contingent. Having three straight men lead the group further destabilised the boundaries between gay and Defence communities by symbolically expressing both as integral parts of each other. Air Force Warrant Officer Mark Pentreath said,

Why wouldn't I be proud [to lead the contingent]? These men and women are part of the team that is our future as an ADF. To me, marching in the Mardi Gras parade is no different to representing the Air Force at any cultural event that is important to our people such as White Ribbon Day, or International Women's Day.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> 'Defence forces gear up for Mardi Gras', *SBS World News*, 2 March 2013. See also 'NSW: Mardi Gras has come a long way since '78', *Australian Associated Press*, 2 March 2013; Anna Whitelaw, 'Mardis Gras still marching for social change 35 years on', *Sunday Age* (Melbourne), 3 March 2013, 5.

<sup>80</sup> Tim Barlass and Fleta Page, 'Defence in step with gay respect', *Canberra Times*, 3 March 2013, A008; Tim Barlass, 'After 35 years, Mardi Gras still breaks down barriers', *Sun Herald* (Sydney), 3 March 2013, 12

<sup>81</sup> Luke Malpass, 'Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras 2015 floods the streets of Sydney with colour', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 8 March 2015, <http://www.smh.com.au/nsw/sydney-gay-and-lesbian-mardi-gras-2015-floods-the-streets-of-sydney-with-colour-20150307-13xyzi.html> (accessed 2 July 2015).

<sup>82</sup> 'Service Warrant Officers to march at Mardi Gras 2015', 11 February 2015, *DEFGLIS*, <https://www.defglis.com.au/index.php/news/168-service-warrant-officers-to-march-at-mardi-gras-2015>

Altman wrote in 1999 that ‘Perhaps Mardi Gras’ great lesson is that the more we celebrate diversity, the easier it becomes to find commonalities: that gay communities are made up of people who also belong to every other community in Australian society’.<sup>83</sup> Pentreath was explicitly reconceptualising Mardi Gras as one of many events celebrating Australia’s, and by extension the ADF’s, diversity in the twenty-first century.

### **Postscript: Commemorations Brought Full-Circle**

In 2015, DEFGLIS turned its attention back to past LGBTI military service by organising events on Anzac Day. The centenary of the ANZAC landing at Gallipoli motivated DEFGLIS to plan their own commemorations. Thirty-two years after GESA first tried to lay a wreath, DEFGLIS organised for current and former LGBTI servicemen and women to lay wreaths at the Shrine of Remembrance in Melbourne, Australian War Memorial in Canberra, Cenotaph at Martin Place in Sydney and in Townsville.<sup>84</sup> In Melbourne, Max Campbell – surviving former member of GESA – had the honour of laying the wreath, flanked by currently serving members of the Navy, Army and Air Force. These events were low-key and attracted minimal attention in both the mainstream and LGBTI media.<sup>85</sup> Like GESA in 1982, these

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(accessed 2 July 2015). See also ‘Senior Defence Force members to lead ADF contingent in Mardi Gras Parade’, *RN Breakfast*, ABC Radio, 6 March 2015, <http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/breakfast/australian-defence-force-marches-in/6285110> (accessed 2 July 2015).

<sup>83</sup> Altman, 10.

<sup>84</sup> There is another documented case of a wreath-laying at the Hobart Cenotaph in 1992. This event was not on Anzac Day and the organisers were activists, rather than current or ex-service personnel, pushing to repeal the ban on lesbian, gay and bisexual military service. See ‘Wreathes laid for Gay and Lesbian Service-Personnel’, *Pink Thylacines* (Tasmania), September 1992, 15.

<sup>85</sup> Benedict Brook, ‘Hopes first official commemoration of gay diggers will start “new tradition” on ANZAC Day’, *Star Observer*, 23 April 2015, <http://www.starobserver.com.au/news/local-news/hopes-first-official-commemoration-of-gay-diggers-will-start-new-tradition-on-anzac-day/135370> (accessed 2 July 2015); ‘DEFGLIS to commemorate LGBTI service’, *Gay News Network*, 10 April 2015,

wreath-layings were meant to be apolitical whilst concurrently pushing for a more inclusive Anzac legend. Whereas in 1982 the RSL obstructed the wreath-laying, continuing to champion an exclusivist digger identity, in 2015 there was no opposition from the local RSLs or Australian War Memorial. The Anzac Day wreath-layings are now an annual DEFGLIS event, extended to Brisbane's Dawn Service as well in 2016. Fiona Nicoll, the only scholar to juxtapose the meanings of Anzac Day and Mardi Gras, writes: 'The intersection between these two national parades is the place where the past erupts into the present and where the future of national identity will be decided'.<sup>86</sup> By now positioning LGBTI military service within both Anzac Day and Mardi Gras, LGBTI Australians are asserting their omnipresence as integral members of Australia's national identity – past, present and future.

This, of course, does not mean that LGBTI people are now suddenly welcomed in the Anzac legend. There is continuing resistance to DEFGLIS marching in Mardi Gras in uniform, and opponents often invoke continuing masculinist constructs of the Anzac legend. One ex-serviceman's complaint to Chief of Defence Force David Hurley about the Mardi Gras in 2013 read, 'With the ANZAC and Gallipoli centenary celebrations coming up very soon, for which we will all be celebrating deeds of courage on foreign battlefields – to then see their modern counterparts parade in this manner was almost sickening'.<sup>87</sup> Facebook and Twitter comments on ADF posts about Mardi Gras have been a mix of condemnation and support for LGBTI service personnel. One comment on a *Gay News Network* article about the DEFGLIS wreath-layings read, 'What if I was to drop a bombshell? There were no gay Anzacs lol. There weren't any "homosexuals", sodomy is a behaviour haha. Keep your

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<http://gaynewsnetwork.com.au/news/national/defglis-to-commemorate-lgbti-service-17250.html> (accessed 2 July 2015).

<sup>86</sup> Nicoll, 190.

<sup>87</sup> Letter to General David Hurley, 8 April 2013.



fantasies in house and stop defaming the Australian Army'.<sup>88</sup> Such comments are indicative of both the endurance of a particular exclusivist, hegemonic masculine digger mythology, and LGBTI service personnel's ongoing struggle for inclusion in the Anzac legend.

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<sup>88</sup> Comment from 'Anthony', 22 June 2015, on 'DEFGLIS to commemorate LGBTI service', *Gay News Network*, 10 April 2015.