



The Gazette

The Official Newsletter of the
GAY AND LESBIAN IMMIGRATION TASK FORCE QUEENSLAND INC.
PO Box 378 Paddington QLD 4064



Trevor Robinson's
Membership # 767

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Meetings

Second Thursday
of month at
Sportsman Hotel
130 Leichardt St,
Spring Hill starting
at 7:30 PM

REMEMBER

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 18 May 2009 at Sportsman Hotel

Formal meeting commences 7:30

Refreshments: from 6:30

Neil and his staff will be circulating with a delicious selection of refreshments food, together with red or white wine and orange juice. Our grateful thanks to Neil McLucas, and Paul who has reserved the main dining room for the GLITF AGM.

Please come along and meet our VIP guests

For GLITF Qld to continue to assist future Gays and Lesbians who fall in love with someone from overseas it is vital we have your continued moral and financial support.

Note: To have full voting rights at the AGM you must be a financial member before the meeting comes to order. Appointed members will be at the entry to the dining room to receipt membership renewals.

The current membership renewal fees are set at \$60 for a couple and \$35 for a single.



Our Executive Committee looking a little blurred—the camera shook not them

A Plea

Our funds are seriously low and the lowest they have been for several years.

Insurance, both Public Liability & Professional Indemnity, Registration, Compulsory Library, Monthly CPD sessions, Membership of MIA, are all big costly items, and many more.

Qld GLITF is a voluntary organisation. Our Registered Migration Agent and your Com'tee are all volunteers. GLITF monthly meetings, Immigration advice, guest speakers is all achieved by volunteers. Your subscriptions are needed. Please renew for 2009-10! Remember those who like you in future will need advice and a support group.

Help organise our General Meetings, an idea for a raffle, would you like to help with a particular social or cultural event, or could you help reach out to couples who may need our help. You are most welcome to lend a hand.

DO WE NEED TO UPDATE OUR RECORDS?

Has your address/e-mail changed? To ensure you get newsletters and urgent e-mails, GLITF Qld needs your current email and regular mail addresses. If your details have changed please help us update the records by sending us the new information.

Please

Join in on the march behind our banner to Musgrave Park to Pride in the Park on Saturday 13 June.

Gay couples to face new era of financial discrimination

A major achievement of the Rudd Labor Govt is the recent passage of historic legalisation to remove discrimination against gay and Lesbian couples from dozens of laws. As the celebrations die down, however, it is clear the win for human rights is a serious blow to many gay people.

Elderly gay couples will lose their pension income, face Centrelink investigations into their sex lives and will be forced to "come-out" of the closet and risk prosecution for fraud. Some in their late 60's, 70's and 80's have faced a lifetime of inequality; they missed out on benefits available to heterosexuals and many have felt the full force of the Nation's homophobia. Now they are too old to gain from the new legal equality won in areas as diverse as family law and insurance entitlements. Instead, from 1 July next year, they will suffer pension losses through being treated as a couple rather than 2 singles. This will cause Major problems for many Aussie sponsors; and remember DIAC are linked to HSA, Centrelink and the Taxation Office.

We have to maintain we are in Interdependent relationships NOT de facto ones.

We will need to argue that we slipped into an Interdependent relationship by force of circumstances and would be horrified to think we are considered by friends and family as in fact spouse relationship.

Also, we will claim we do not have a sexual relationships with each other but indulge in sexual enjoyment in saunas and other places.

Also where there are 3 or 4 of us living together sharing our lives. If the Govt considers us de facto spouses then is it a bigamous relationship?

Tourists stay closer to home

Imig Dept figures show the number of Business visas fell 30% in Jan 09 compared with the same period last year, and that Temp Skilled visas have dropped by 33% since Sept.

In signs that local business were abandoning the controversial 457 visa scheme, the Imig Dept recorded a 16% drop in the number of visas issued last month, down to 4070 from 4830 in January.

In Jan a total of 28,621 business visas were issued, that compared with 41,091 in Jan 08, and 35,903 in Jan 07. Tourism numbers for January were artificially inflated by the Chinese New Year celebrations held that month in a spike in International visitor numbers as people sought out their relatives.

Number of visitor visas granted non sponsored-short stay.

Jan 07=313,282; Jan 08=319,040; Jan 09=294,273.

The number of 457 visas fell from a high of approximately 5,800 during 2008 to below 4000 last month.

Fewer Australians are at present travelling Internationally.

One category of overseas visitor to hold up was Student visas- overseas enrolments have risen a record 20.7% to 543,898 last year.

Justice at last for gay war widower

Edward Young has finally proved he is entitled to a war pension. It has been 10yrs since his partner, Larry Cains, died. They met in London in 1960 – he a model, was introduced to Mr Cains, a photographer who had served with the Australian Army in Borneo during World War II. “*He was desperately handsome,*” Mr Young said. “*We spent two weeks together and I told him I wanted to spend my life with him*”. Now after a decade of fighting to have the law recognise his and Mr Cain’s love as equal, the Sydneysider will soon become the country’s first recognised gay war widow.

Mugabe’s daughter studies in Hong Kong

International sanctions have been put in place against leading members of the Robert Mugabe regime, restriction the opportunities of family members to travel or gain education overseas.

But, Bona Mugabe, aged around 20, does not appear to have met any obstacles in studying at the University of HK.

After the news of the alleged assault raised by a photographer in HK by Grace Mugabe, wife of Zimbabwe’s President, led to the revelation that their daughter Bona is studying in the city under a false name. China, the ruler of HK maintains close relations with the Mugabe regime, whose security forces it continues to arm, despite the embargo.

Richard Jones, on assignment for London’s *The Sunday Times*, said he was attacked while taking photos of Grace Mugabe shopping in the Tsim Sha Tusi district. Bona Mugabe was on holiday in Zimbabwe, but on her return the university would “keep a watchful eye” on her situation.

Millions of Zimbabwe children will be denied their education when schools reopened on 27 Jan 09, as thousands of teachers may fail to return to work, British charity Save our Children warned.

Less than 10yrs ago Zimbabwe had the best education system in sub-Saharan Africa, with nearly every child going to school.

Now the majority of children are out of school and the system is in tatters.

The rulers of China have so much to answer for:- Tibet, Burma (Myanmar), Zimbabwe.

More FOI delays under Rudd

Delays in processing Freedom of Information requests have ballooned under the Rudd Govt, which promised before the election to free up access to documents and improve transparency.

The FOI Act annual report, released on 4 Feb 09, also shows a major drop last yr in the number of documents released in full, from 80.6% in 2006-07 to 71.4% last financial yr.

The proportion of requests taking more than 3mths to process more than doubled last yr.

There was also a significant decline in the proportion of requests processed in less than 30 days, from 71.2% in 2006-07 to 67.9% last financial yr.

The Dept of Immigration had the worst record for delays, taking more than three months to respond in 38% of cases.

The Dept of Prime Minister & Cabinet, which is responsible for FOI reform, took more than 3 months to respond 27.8% of cases.

Visas at Risk as NAB cuts ties with Satyam

The National Bank plan to cut ties with Satyam Computer Services after bank executives cancelled the second phase of a massive outsourcing project contracted to the troubled IT service provider.

The decision is also likely to result in working visas being revoked for the 100 staff Satyam brought to Australia to support the project.

Satyam and it’s staff have been under siege since January, when chairman and founder B. Ramalinga Raju admitted to inflating the company’s cash reserves by \$1.54 billion.

Overseas Students

Despite the downturn in the economy there is an increase of 15% in Overseas student enrolments.

Business studies is very high on the subject of choice. 15% of University Income comes from Overseas students. Australia is educating 30,000 Malaysian students. Melbourne is the most popular choice followed by Sydney.

A higher quality of students choose to study overseas.

MAPL the new Govt Registration Authority for Mig Agents

MIA who had the contract to administer MARA; the Migration Agents Registration Authority will cease on 30 June. From 1 July it will be run by DIAC... the Minister doesn't like self regulation.

Cash-for-certificate companies raided.

In what could be one of the largest-ever migration scams involving overseas students, nine businesses were raided in connection with allegations that they charged thousands of dollars for fake certificates and work references. Nine Melb businesses – including a private training college, a curry restaurant, graphic design studios and business and education consultants – were raided by Federal immigration officers and Aust Federal Police.

Migration sources said it was believed similar scams were operating in other capital cities. A spokesman for the Dept of Imig said: "It is alleged that for a fee those involved have been providing clients with fraudulent education qualifications and bogus work references to assist them in obtaining Australian permanent residence through the skilled migration program."

Several people are likely to be charged with migration fraud offences following a year-long investigation. The main office raided was registered as a business consultancy owned by Gary Zhou and Jane Zhao. It was allegedly operating as an unregistered migration agency. Immigration sources said the company allegedly coordinated a scam believed to involve hundreds of international students, mainly from China and India.

Potential applicants are warned not to produce any false document with an application, and we remind readers that the Mig Act contains heavy criminal sanctions for people convicted of producing false documents, and also permits DIAC to cancel a visa of someone when the visa is granted as a result of the production of false documents.

Freedom of Information

The first-ever review of secrecy clauses in all Com'With legislation has found 370 distinct provisions scattered through 166 laws that make it a criminal offence to disclose information. While secrecy provisions in laws dealing with national security, taxation and crime were hardly unexpected, the commission's president, Professor David Weisbrot, said he was surprised "to find the Federal statute book has become riddled with secrecy provisions". The commission recently released a community consultation paper of its inquiry into secrecy laws, which is attempting to work out a balance between secrecy needed for some documents and the Govt's commitment to increased openness and transparency.

Multicultural Affairs – Anti-racism campaign

The Federal Govt will be able to respond more quickly to ugly flare-ups such as the Cronulla riots with a new anti-racism campaign. The *Diverse Australia Program* will replace grants by the Howard Govt to promote "living in harmony, after an internal review found the need for a stronger focus on racial tolerance. However *Harmony Day*, the annual event on March 21, will stay. The review found it had strong community support. Under the "emerging issues" of the *Diverse Australia Program*, grants of up to \$150,000 will be available for projects in areas where racial intolerance is identified. Under the community projects component, smaller inexperienced groups can apply for grants of up to \$5000, with a much simpler application process. The new name seeks a focus on respect and fair treatment.

Mount Gambia embraces Burmese seeking new life

Resettlement of Burmese in Mount Gambia is a wonderful example of how local communities and Govt can work together to support successful settlement, the Parliamentary Secretary for Multicultural Affairs and Settlement Services, Laurie Ferguson said. In Mt Gambia to meet the Burmese community, Mr Ferguson said to 50 people, about 10 families, were mainly minority Karen people who had been driven out of Burma into refugee camps in Thailand by ethnic troubles under successive military regimes.

Projects between police and Muslim communities

A second round of partnership funding is now available for groups to build relationships and improve trust between Muslim communities and local police, national; Race Discrimination Commissioner Tom Calma said. The Community Policing Partnerships Program (CPPP) encourages police and Muslim communities to work together in responding to current issues identified and agreed by Muslim communities and Police.

Foreign Affairs – Diplomatic Appointment of High commissioner to Brunei

Mr Mark Sawers is to be Australia's new High Commissioner to Brunei Darussalam succeeding Dr Ruth Adler, who has been High Commissioner since Feb 2006. His Majesty the Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam visited Australia in Feb 2005 and again in 2007 to attend the APEC Economic Leaders Meeting.

Strong people-to-people links date back to 1945 when Australian troops were involved in operations in Brunei during the final stages of World War II. These links were given formal recognition in 2008 of a memorial in Brunei to commemorate the 1945 landings of Australian troops.

Setting humanity adrift

The Rohingyas are one of the Asian minorities no country wants. About 750,000 in number, of Indian race and Muslim faith, they live in poverty on the Arakan coast of north-western Burma. The Burmese military regime doesn't want them; they don't fit into its mental picture of a nation of South-East Asian ethnicity, Buddhist religion, and Tibeto-Burman language. Bangladesh doesn't want any more mouths to feed, however culturally akin. When 250,000 Rohingyas fled across its border in 1992, they ended up in refugee camps and squatter slums, where about 120,000 remain in misery.

Those who stayed in Burma and those who returned live as non-citizens, tightly watched by the Army, obliged to seek permission for even local travel around Arakan State. Not surprisingly, some opt for the third option of seeking work and shelter in other countries.

Last October, Senator Evans announced Australia would take some Rohingyas in future years as part of the Offshore Refugee Resettlement programme.

Afghans sent home to die

The Imig Minister has determined answers to allegations that up to 20 Afghan asylum seekers rejected by Australian under the Howard Govt's so-called Pacific Solution were killed after returning to Afghanistan, and others remain in hiding from the Taliban. The claims are contained in a documentary aired on SBS on Nov 19. The film, *A Well-Founded Fear*, produced by Anne Delaney, is based on the excellent efforts of Phil Glendenning, the director of social justice agency the Edmund Rice Centre, who has spent the past six yrs tracing many of these rejected asylum seekers.

About 400 Afghans detained on Nauru were returned to Afghanistan after having their asylum claims rejected. They were told by Mitigation Officials it was safe to go home, and that if they refused, they would remain in detention forever, according to accounts given to Mr Glendenning. Another 400 who refused to go voluntarily were eventually found to be refugees and were settled in Australia or other countries including New Zealand. Mr Glendenning says he has documented the deaths of nine of the rejected Afghans at the hands of the Taliban, but he believes the figure is actually about 20.

Treatment of Asylum seekers no better under Rudd: report

Asylum seekers are still being held in miserable conditions despite the softening of immigration policy, a new report finds. The Aust Human Rights Commission's annual report on detention found the Rudd Govt has not made the changes to detention policy it announced last July. The report found asylum seekers, including children, continue to be held indefinitely. People being processed on Christmas Island do not have adequate access to basic services, the report says. And access to interpreters, translated documents, and recreational and educational activities at all detention centres is lacking.

The report calls for the Migration Act to be amended so detention is the exception rather than the norm, and any decision to detain a person be subject to prompt review by a court.

Boat people conspiracy smashed

Indonesian police say they have smashed a people-smuggling ring and arrested the kingpin of the syndicate responsible for sending rickety vessels laden with asylum-seekers on the perilous journey to Australia.

Lone children found on people-smuggling boats

Unaccompanied children are increasingly turning up as asylum seekers on vessels attempting to cross from Indonesia to Australia, Senator Chris Evens said.

Visa worker deaths double in a year

More migrants working on 457 visas have died since Labor won the Federal election than in more than three

years under the previous Govt, Imig Dept records show.

Despite assurances that the Imig Minister, Chris Evans, was cleaning up the system, at least six temporary skilled workers have died since Labor came to power a year ago. Three work related deaths were recorded from 2004 until the Coalition lost office. A Mig analyst Bob Kinnaird, said the increase was staggering. “This is a matter of life and death. It can’t get any more serious”.

The Govt is under pressure to adopt changes recommended by the recent Deegan report into the 457 scheme. It said workers should be paid at market rates not minimum salary levels and allowed more flexibility in changing employers once in Australia.

Subclass 457 Policy Update

DIAC has released a Subclass 457 policy update which takes effect from 24 Feb 09.

This policy update is in fact an instruction to DIAC case officers on how they should make their decision. The policy update tells us migration agents what the case officers will be looking for as they consider each application.

Case Officers (“decision makers”) have to “carefully consider the prevailing economic conditions, both globally and locally” and satisfy themselves that “There is a benefit to Australia as opposed to a benefit business.”

The four elements of the Benefit to Australia requirement are:

- (i) the creation or maintenance of employment for Australian citizens or Australian permanent residents.
- (ii) expansion of Australian trade in goods or services
- (iii) the improvement of Australian business links with international markets
- (iv) competitiveness within sectors of the Australian economy

Labour market testing?

This policy update says that “in times of growing unemployment decision-makers would need to be satisfied that the skills and attributes required for this role could not be found locally and that the individual proposed to be sponsored demonstrably have higher level of skill than can be sourced within Australia.

This may mean that there will need to some sort of labour market testing exercise to satisfy the decision maker.

Nominated salary

This policy update puts great emphasis on the salary of the nominated occupation and “its proximity to the average remuneration for that occupation”.

The policy update advises that for applications where the total remuneration package nominated by the sponsor is over AUD100,000 for occupations in ASCO 1 and ASCO 2, “consideration should be given whether the nominated level of remuneration reflects the average remuneration for the occupation grouping

It then goes to advise that “There are a number of indicators of average remuneration that would be acceptable”, such as a relevant collective agreement, a relevant industrial award, the salary for equivalent positions within the sponsoring business, and Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) data.

It would seem from this that it is expected that information or evidence about the salary reflecting “average remuneration” should be provided with the application.

Label free travel for Subclass 457 visa holders

As of Jan 2nd 2009 Subclass 457 visa holders may travel label free to Australia if they hold a passport from an eligible country. The complete list of eligible label free countries for the Subclass 457 visa holders is available from the Departmental website. This is to reduce the requirement for Subclass 457 visa holders to have their visa label placed in their Passport prior to travel or on arrival to Australia. Specifically this is for ETA, e676, or eVisitor eligible passport holders. The visa and passport details of Subclass 457 visa holders will be electronically recorded.

2008-09 Planning Levels for Migration Intake

Skilled

Skilled / General Skilled / Students 98,000

Temporary / Skilled 457 (Employer Sponsored) 28,000

Business Skills 7,000

Family

Partners 42,500

Parents 8,500

Children 3,000

Other family 2,500

Record intake good for nation: Evans

The Imig Minister Chris Evan, defended the Govt's record high immigration intake, saying migrants often have better job outcomes than Australians, buy property and have a positive impact on the economy. The 2008-09 program of 190,300 migrants – with 133,500 places for permanent skilled migrants – has come under fire from the Opposition for putting unnecessary strain on Australia's infrastructure in the face of the global economic crisis. Sharman Stone the Opposition's spokeswoman on migration, called for a 25% cut to immigration back to 2005-06 levels. "Unemployment is beginning to rise there are real issues with housing congestion and growing community concern about the road ahead". Dr Stone said.

Migration to tackle economic crisis

Migrants with urgently needed skills or jobs already lined up will be granted priority to enter Australia, after the migration program was changed recently to deal with the economic crisis and industry demand.

From Jan 1st the intake of permanent migrants will favour workers with badly needed skills. The migrants, many of whom are sponsored by employers, will have their applications speeded up. The forecast number of permanent skilled migrants remains at 133,500 for the year to June 30.

In previous years the program had delivered a "less than optimal outcome in terms of the mix of skills and occupations". "In the last 3 years, just five occupations, out of the hundreds available, accounted for almost half the visas granted to primary applicants." For example, while Australia took in 28,800 accountants in the three years to 2007-08, it attracted only 300 carpenters.

The list of skills in critical shortage will focus on medical, engineers and construction trades.

"Fast tracking professionals on the critical skills list would ensure the economy gets the skills it needs now, not just those applicants who applied first," Senator Evans said.

The general skilled migration now has a new occupation list called "*Critical Skills List*" (CSL) which will be given priority processing.

Diversity of Australia's people

In less than a lifetime we have changed from an Anglo-Celtic society of fewer than eight million to a multicultural society of more than 21 million. Cultural diversity is a source of both social and economic wealth.

Over the past 60 years, Australians have welcomed millions of people from more than 200 countries to become part of the Australian community.

457 visas – employer nomination

Australia's record intake of temporary skilled migrants during the economic downturn could boost the number of Australian unemployed, as research suggests it is being used as a "*back-door*" to permanent entry by low-wage workers.

"People at the lower end of the spectrum are becoming permanent residents," Bob Birrell said. "They're vulnerable to exploitation because the employer knows they are not going to quibble because they're desperate to get permanent resident nomination."

Overall, Australia is taking around 200,000 new migrants a year.

In 2007-08, about 58,050 migrants came in under the 457 program, a figure that excludes their family members.

Professor Birrell said, in that year, about 90% of the 17,760 permanent migrants who were sponsored by an employer onshore were former 457 visa holders.

Holders of 457 visas are subject to less stringent language requirements and there is no labour market testing, meaning employers do not have to demonstrate that the position cannot be filled locally.

A minimum salary level of \$43,440 applies to most 457 visa workers.

In a trend that has alarmed unions, who fear the 457 program is being exploited by business to undercut wages, the program is increasingly sourcing workers from the developing world.

In 2007-08, 8250 Indian workers came in under the program compared with 2880 in 2004-05

Over the same period, the number of Filipino workers jumped from 600 to 5120, and the number of Chinese workers rose from 930 to 3360.

Sacked workers on 457 visas stay illegally

A black-market of workers will grow as mining and construction companies lay off migrants on 457 visas because of the financial crisis, unions are warning. Temporary workers, sacked before the maximum four yrs is

up, have become trapped – unable to stay in Australia and not yet capable of paying debts to migration agents at home. Temporary overseas workers who stay more than 28 days after they are sacked do so illegally. This means they are likely to take jobs with poor conditions.

Employers are considered to have met their sponsorship obligations once they have bought a plane ticket for the migrant to return to their country of origin and told the Govt that employment has ceased. The number of migrants found overstaying 457 visas grew by 12% in the year to June 30. At that time, 326 such people had disappeared into the community.

Dhaka signs deal with Canberra to fight terror

A memorandum of understanding (MoU) between the Govt's of Bangladesh and Australia was signed recently with a commitment to jointly combat international terrorism. Home Secretary Abdul Karim and the Aust High Commissioner Douglas Foskett signed the MoU on behalf of their respective Govt's.

Villawood to be knocked down

The ageing and cramped Villawood detention centre will be knocked down, with a new facility to be built on Com'Wlth land either close to the existing site or the airport.

Funding for the new centre is expected in next year's budget following a \$1 million redevelopment study that is close to being finalised and believed to say the existing centre is no longer viable.

Alleged kingpin held as boat stopped

Indonesian and Australian police have arrested a man believed to be responsible for sending three boatloads of asylum seekers to Aust. The joint operation conducted in South-East Sulawesi resulted in a boat containing 40 Afghan and Pakistani asylum seekers being prevented from making the journey to Australia, the seizure of the boat and arrest of its crew. The alleged people-smuggler, an Indonesian named Haji Tahir, from Kupang in West Timor, and his human cargo were detained after a sophisticated operation that included the use of aircraft.

Asylum seekers to go on criminal database

Asylum-seekers and their teenage children will be included in a criminal database, with their fingerprints to be rolled into the national system by mid-2009. The plan will give the National Automated Fingerprint Identification System (NAFIS) access to the Immigration Dept's database of about 3000 detainee fingerprints. About 1000 of the prints would belong to asylum-seekers aged 15 and older.

Illegal worker awareness campaign to inform farmers

Officers from the DIAC, Centrelink and Workplace Ombudsman (WO) will conduct a multiagency awareness campaign in the Robinvale region of north-western Victoria. The aim of the campaign is to inform local growers of their rights and responsibilities when hiring workers to harvest their crop during this picking season. Illegal workers are often associated with cash economy industries, characterised by abuses of taxation, employment and welfare laws.

Man charged with possessing false passport – AFP

A 38-yr-old Ghanaian man will face Perth Central Court charged with possessing a false passport. The man's visa was cancelled and he was charged with possessing a document knowing it was a false foreign travel document contrary to section 21(2) of the Foreign Passports (Law Enforcement and Security) Act 2005.

Guest Worker Scheme

The long-awaited trial to recruit guest workers from Pacific Islands to pick fruit in areas short of labour has been hit by delays and could now be sunk by the economic downturn.

Six months ago the Govt said the first migrant workers would arrive with the onset of the picking season before Christmas. As part of the trial, 100 workers were to go to Griffith and the Riverina and Swan Hill in Victoria to pick and pack fruit, the first wave in a migrant labour force expected to grow to 2500. The Govt has signed agreements with Kiribati, Tonga and Vanuatu, but the arrival of workers from these countries is still subject to; negotiations with labour hire companies and Federal Govt has declined to give a start date.

Guest Workers arrive

Fifty Tongans have finally arrived in Australia to pick fruit in NSW areas where farmers are unable to get enough workers. The men will be in the Riverina and Robinvale regions for 7 months under a trial Federal Govt seasonal workers' scheme.

More men will come from Vanuatu, Kiribati and PNG when approved labour hire companies have completed all requirements, which include growers taking steps to first recruit Australians for the jobs. After the trial, 2400 seasonal work visas will be available from July.

Charter of human rights team

The Jesuit lawyer Frank Brennan, who calls himself a "*fence-sitter*" in the Bill of Rights debate, will head the Federal Govt's public consultation on whether Australia needs a human rights charter. The Govt, which expects the issue to generate controversy, hopes the choice of father Brennan will counter charges from the Opposition that it has already made up its mind on introducing a Bill of Rights before results of the public consultation are known.

Fr Brennan has asked for a one month extension, which has been agreed to.

Tibetans meet to find a new freedom path

The future of one of the world's best known freedom struggles is being reassessed by Tibetan refugees in exile. They recently attended an unprecedented meeting at the Indian hill town of Dharamsala. Tibet's spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama, called for the gathering to determine the "best possible future course of action to advance the Tibetan cause".

About 500 legislators, former ministers in the Govt-in-exile, heads of Tibetan associations and other prominent Tibetans gathered at a school auditorium in upper Dharamsala, for the 5-day meeting. For two decades the Dalai Lama has championed a "*middle way*" for the movement, incorporating a moderate demand for Tibetan "*autonomy*" under Chinese rule and a strict adherence to non-violent protest. But there is agitation, especially among many young Tibetans, for the movement to adopt a tougher stance.

GLITF Committee changes:

Secretary; Kari Richter resigned

Laurent Auclair was appointed to replace Kari.

Ombudsman's 2007-08 annual report

Nearly 40,000 people contacted the office of the Commonwealth Ombudsman for assistance during 2007-08, a 20% increase on the previous year. The report also draws out themes by pointing out the boarder lessons that a single complaint or problem can teach. The report also sets out some challenges faced by the office in discharging its new function of reviewing complaint handling in the Australian Federal Police, and dealing with complaints about the Northern Territory Emergency Response.

Preuptial rights for same-sex, unmarried

Unmarried and same-sex-couples may soon be able to sign "prenups", giving defactos many of the same legal rights as those who are wed. Reforms to the Family Law Act before the Senate would allow agreements to be drawn up by de factos to cover spousal and child maintenance, as well as the division of property in the event of a relationship breakup.

The Bill was circulated in Federal Parliament on 18 Sept 2008 and is awaiting consideration by the Senate. If the legislation is passed, it is expected to be enacted by March 2009.

A de facto relationship can be heterosexual or homosexual and can exist if one of the people involved is legally married to someone else or has another de facto partner.

Multicultural Australia

The Rudd Govt has brought a word back to Australian politics that disappeared under the Howard Govt. It announced the formation of the Australian Multicultural Advisory Council to advise it on promoting social cohesion and stemming racism. Its predecessor was allowed to lapse in 2006 and Australia has been without a multicultural policy since.

The 16-member council includes representatives from Jewish, Filipino, Chinese and Islamic communities as well as human rights and anti-discrimination experts.

Diversity of Australia’s people

In less than a lifetime we have changed from an Anglo-Celtic society of fewer than eight million to a multicultural society to more than 21 million. Cultural diversity is a source of both social and economic wealth.

Victorian State Govt Skilled and Business Migration Program Unit

Registered Migration Agents rec’d an urgent message regarding the suspension of their sponsorship program with Group 4 trades occupation. We need to be vigilant and report unscrupulous or fraudulent behaviour to the relevant authority.

On 29 Jan 2009 Victorian Govt was informed by DIAC that a number of organisations are under investigation by DIAC in relation to work references and education certificates.

As a consequence, until DIAC’s investigation is finalised, the Victorian Skilled and Business Migration Program has suspended the processing of all applications for skilled – sponsored (residence) (subclass 886) Program for ASCO 4 occupations.

**Gay & Lesbian Immigration Task Force of Qld Inc.
Membership Renewal Form – 2009**

Please hand in on the night or post to PO Box 378, Paddington Qld 4064

(a) Australian Partner

(b) Overseas partner

Address: street

Suburb & Post Code

Ph: home

Mobile

E-mail (please print)

E-mail (please print)

I/we the undersigned hereby apply for 2009 membership of the Gay & lesbian Immigration Task Force of Qld Inc. (GLITF) and agree to abide by the Constitution of GLITF. Please find enclosed:

\$ Being a fee of \$60 for a couple’s membership or \$35 for a single.

\$ Donation

Signatures (a)

date

(b)

date

OR

I have transferred to Gay and Lesbian Task Force at Commonwealth Bank of Australia, Wacol BSB 064 160 Account # 100 35935