

“These Are Just a Few Examples of Our Daily Oppressions”: Speaking and Listening to Homosexuality in Australia’s Royal Commission on Human Relationships, 1974–1977

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AUSTRALIA’S ROYAL COMMISSION on Human Relationships was an initiative of the progressive and social democratic Whitlam Labor government. Instituted in 1974 with the unusually broad terms of reference to investigate “the family, social, educational, legal and sexual aspects of male and female relationships,” it was the first inquiry into such a topic in the world.¹ The three commissioners (Justice Elizabeth Evatt, journalist Anne Deveson, and Anglican Archbishop of Brisbane Felix Arnott) delivered their final report in November 1977 after taking evidence from hundreds of both expert and ordinary Australians on a tremendously diverse array of aspects of intimate life. Framed as a response to social, cultural, and technological change and conducted in the hope of a “better understanding of Australian society and the challenges it is facing,” the commission’s findings offered a wide-ranging analysis of Australian private lives.² It made more than five hundred recommendations on a huge array of topics, including sex education, parenting, gender roles, domestic violence, contraception, adoption, and child abuse. Thirteen of these recommendations related to homosexuality. That the report addressed homosexuality at all was testament to the tenacity of gay and lesbian activists who had worked to place gay and lesbian issues on the commission’s agenda through their testimonies and submissions. The commission’s inclusion of gay and lesbian experi-

This research was supported by the National Archives of Australia through the 2012 Frederick Watson Fellowship, which I acknowledge with thanks. I would like to thank Leigh Boucher, Barbara Baird, and Robert Reynolds for the discussion, collaboration, and feedback that have helped shape this research. Thank you also to Annette Timm, whose careful and thoughtful editorial advice has improved this article considerably.

¹ Elizabeth Evatt, Felix Arnott, and Anne Deveson, *Royal Commission on Human Relationships, Interim Report* (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1976), 6.

² *Ibid.*, 2–3.

ences was controversial: the Catholic Church challenged the validity of the commission to hear testimony from homosexual people. Yet gay men and lesbians were nonetheless able to use the commission to make strategic claims on the Australian state in the mid-1970s, when decriminalization of homosexuality was yet to be achieved in most jurisdictions and the radical dreams of gay liberation were fading and fragmenting. The commissioners were presented with two opposing points of view on homosexuality throughout their deliberations, but they were persuaded by the claims of gay and lesbian activists not just on the question of decriminalization but also on the need for redefining ideas of family, sex education programs, and antidiscrimination protections for gays and lesbians.³

This article examines the ways that lesbians and gay men made citizenship claims upon the state in mid-1970s Australia through the case study of the Royal Commission on Human Relationships. Seeking rights and protections from a newly receptive social liberal state, gay men and lesbians framed their experiences through narratives of suffering, exclusion, and citizenship. The Royal Commission on Human Relationships facilitated and legitimated a kind of sexual citizenship for homosexuals, challenging the heteronormative model of citizenship, which had long dominated Australian political life.⁴ The term "sexual citizenship" is deeply contested, and in her 2017 review essay, Diane Richardson noted that sexual citizenship is a multifaceted concept, understood in a variety of ways. Much of the scholarly work on sexual citizenship has analyzed the ways that conventional frameworks of citizenship are underpinned by normative understandings of sexuality and gender. The concept has also been used to theorize the ways in which rights are granted or denied to different social groups on the basis of sexuality.⁵ These insights are underpinned by the work of feminist theorists of citizenship like Carole Pateman, who argued that established citizenship models rest on a patriarchal "sexual contract" between men and women.⁶ Indeed, since the formation of the Australian nation in 1901, the benefits of Australian citizenship had been distributed through the white heterosexual family unit, which was structured by a gendered divide between the public and private spheres.⁷ Second-wave feminists from the 1960s onward

³ Stephen Angelides, "'The Continuing Homosexual Offensive': Sex Education, Gay Rights and Homosexual Recruitment," in *Homophobia: An Australian History*, ed. Shirleene Robinson (Annandale: Federation Press, 2008), 173–76.

⁴ On the heteronormative model of Australian citizenship, see Carol Johnson, "From Morality to Equality: Labor's Sexuality Conundrum," paper presented at the Australian Political Studies Association annual conference, 29 August 2014, http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2440135, 2.

⁵ Diane Richardson, "Rethinking Sexual Citizenship," *Sociology* 51 no. 2 (2017): 210–12.

⁶ Carole Pateman, *The Sexual Contract* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1988), 2.

⁷ Alison Holland, "The Common Bond? Australian Citizenship," in *Australian History: Themes and Debates*, ed. Martyn Lyons and Penny Russell (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2005), 155–56.

contested this public/private split, telling stories of experiences of inequality and violence in the private sphere in order to claim public rights and protections and articulating a citizenship identity that did not rest solely on their roles as wives or mothers. Similarly, lesbians' and gay men's evidence to the commission revealed their tangled and multiple understandings of the state and its seemingly new possibilities. Their testimonies also contested the public/private split as they sought to construct homosexuality as a public identity rather than one narrowly confined to the private sphere. By telling stories about their experiences as homosexuals to the state, they also began to articulate a homosexual citizenship.

Following Richardson, I am using the term "sexual citizenship" to describe the ways that these men and women made claims for particular rights and protections from the state on the basis of their sexuality and also to describe how this exposed the heteronormative underpinnings of Australian citizenship.⁸ They frequently invoked the power of the state, locating themselves within its categories and using its language, even as they sought to transform the ways the state functioned. By presenting themselves as unequal citizens, subject to "daily oppressions" because of their sexuality, gays and lesbians worked to legitimize the figure of the homosexual sexual citizen and his or her claims on the state. Such strategic choices made sense in a political environment before the decriminalization of homosexuality, in which gays and lesbians were seeking recognition and social visibility. These choices might have had the effect of foreclosing other possibilities for gay and lesbian lives in subsequent years: making claims on the state in this way could recast and reinforce the power of the state itself. However, in the historical context of mid-1970s Australia, a progressive government seemed to offer new possibilities to a gay and lesbian movement that was entering a less visible, less confrontational era of protest.⁹ Making claims in the language of citizenship was therefore a central and productive part of activists' engagement with the state in this period.

The article begins by situating these new claims in relation to Australian citizenship traditions and explaining the establishment of the Royal Commission on Human Relationships in 1974 within the context of the election of the government of Gough Whitlam and the activity of the women's and gay and lesbian movement in the same period. I then examine the meanings of sexual citizenship and the ways it functioned in gay and lesbian politics in the 1970s. After examining the themes of the thirty-nine individual and group testimonies about homosexuality received by the Royal Commission on Human Relationships, I will then analyze the meanings of these testimonies and the ways these arguments about homosexual rights found their way into the commission's final report.

⁸ Richardson, "Rethinking Sexual Citizenship," 211.

⁹ Graham Willett, *Living Out Loud: A History of Gay and Lesbian Activism in Australia* (St. Leonards: Allen and Unwin, 2000), 110.

WHITLAM, LABOR, AND THE ROYAL COMMISSION
ON HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS

The 1972 election of the Whitlam Labor government represented the first change of government at the federal level in Australia since 1949. Between 1949 and 1972 Australia's political landscape had been overwhelmingly dominated by successive conservative Liberal-Country party coalition governments. This unbroken period of conservative rule meant that Australia had not, as Paul Strangio has put it, "enjoyed the salad days of social democracy" that other Western democracies had in the postwar boom: Australia had not constructed a universal welfare state, and government social spending had been relatively modest, in spite of the needs of rapidly expanding suburban populations and a large-scale immigration program.¹⁰ By the time he became leader of the Australian Labor Party (ALP) in 1967, Gough Whitlam had sought to remedy this with an extensive policy program premised on continuing economic growth. The party also worked to modernize its governance structures and broaden its constituency beyond the trade union movement, slowly embracing the emerging new middle class, which was interested in "postmaterial" issues of social reform like the abolition of the White Australia policy, the campaign to end capital punishment, and the reform of Australia's repressive censorship laws.¹¹ This new coalition between social progressives and trade unionists ultimately returned the ALP to power in 1972.

Political scientist Carol Johnson argues that Whitlam had a new, more expansive vision of equality that encompassed groups previously excluded from full citizenship rights such as women, migrants, and Indigenous people. She suggests that Whitlam's agenda to address social inequality was underpinned by a new conception of citizenship. The citizen-subject of Australian social democracy for much of the twentieth century was a male wage-earner and head of household, with women receiving benefits via their spouses.¹² Whitlam, Johnson argues, sought to redefine citizenship to facilitate women's independence from male breadwinners. Responding to the demands of the women's movement, Whitlam appointed a women's affairs advisor (a world first) to his office and enacted reforms toward equal pay, more affordable contraception, a single mothers' welfare payment, and better government support for childcare.¹³ However, Johnson suggests that while

¹⁰ Paul Strangio, "Instability, 1966–82," in *The Cambridge History of Australia*, vol. 2, *The Commonwealth of Australia*, ed. Alison Bashford and Stuart Macintyre (Port Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 143.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 140.

¹² Carol Johnson, "Gough Whitlam and the Re-imagined Citizen- Subject of Australian Social Democracy," in *Making Modern Australia: The Whitlam Government's 21st Century Agenda*, ed. Jenny Hocking (Clayton: Monash University Publishing, 2017), 153–60.

¹³ Jenny Hocking, *Gough Whitlam: His Time; the Biography, Volume II* (Melbourne: Miegunyah Press, an imprint of Melbourne University Publishing, 2012) 82–83.

Whitlam “may have been prepared to challenge the traditional gendered division that saw women’s issues as issues confined to the private sphere of life, and not properly a matter for politics, . . . he did not challenge a similar division that appeared to be occurring in issues of homosexuality.”¹⁴ Whitlam was slower to challenge the heteronormative citizenship models under which the ALP operated in postwar Australia, which relegated homosexuality to a matter of “private” morality. In the early 1970s neither side of Australian politics yet regarded gays and lesbians as having claims to equal rights. By the late 1960s there was some cautious support for the decriminalization of male homosexual acts in Australia, voiced by civil libertarians, progressive MPs, and liberal reformers. Their arguments were largely framed in the terms advanced in the British Wolfenden report of 1957, which recommended the decriminalization of male homosexual acts in private.¹⁵ Established to inquire into the laws relating to homosexuality and prostitution, Wolfenden marked a significant shift in the conception of the function of the law: its role, as Jeffrey Weeks argues, was to preserve public order and decency but “not to impose a particular pattern of moral behaviour.”¹⁶ The recommendation to decriminalize male homosexual acts in private was eventually enacted in the British Sexual Offences Act of 1967, and a similar change was made in Canada with the passage of Bill C-150 in 1969.¹⁷ Yet while this shift to the framework of “consenting adults in private” is traditionally regarded as a cornerstone of liberalization, Kate Gleeson argues that its effect was to “hide homosexual men by secreting them away in a fiercely demarcated zone of ‘privacy.’”¹⁸ Sex in places deemed “public,” such as public toilets, sat outside the British act’s definition of privacy, and arrests and convictions for homosexual offenses actually increased there.¹⁹ Historian Robert Reynolds has similarly noted that the containment of homosexuality in a carefully demarcated “private” sphere “prevented the homosexual from becoming a political subject in his/her own right.”²⁰

In spite of the transnational shift in the legal status of homosexuality, support for reform in late 1960s and early 1970s Australian politics remained partisan. The most vocal supporters of reform were ALP members. Whitlam

¹⁴ Johnson “From Morality to Equality,” 3.

¹⁵ Great Britain, *Report of the Committee on Homosexual Offences and Prostitution* (London: HMSO, 1957).

¹⁶ Jeffrey Weeks, *Coming Out: Homosexual Politics in Britain from the Nineteenth Century to the Present*, rev. ed. (London: Quartet Books, 1990), 165.

¹⁷ Kate Gleeson, “Freudian Slips and Coteries of Vice: The Sexual Offences Act of 1967,” *Parliamentary History* 27, no. 3 (2008): 393–409; and Stuart Chambers, “Pierre Elliott Trudeau and Bill C-150: A Rational Approach to Homosexual Acts, 1968–1969,” *Journal of Homosexuality* 57, no. 2 (2010): 249–66.

¹⁸ Gleeson, “Freudian Slips,” 409.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Robert Reynolds, *From Camp to Queer: Remaking the Australian Homosexual* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2002), 28.

and other ALP members like progressives Moss Cass and Bill Hayden had spoken in support of the decriminalization of homosexuality as early as 1970. Whitlam echoed Canadian prime minister Pierre Trudeau's argument that "the courts have no place in the bedrooms of the nation" and called for a parliamentary conscience vote on decriminalization that would enable all MPs to vote based on their personal views, independent of any official party position.²¹ Law reform was made more difficult by the fact that under Australia's system of federalism, each state needed to enact its own legal changes. Full decriminalization of homosexuality would not be achieved in Australia until Tasmania finally changed its laws in 1997, but in most states it happened between 1975 and 1989.²² A 1973 parliamentary debate over a motion to decriminalize homosexual acts between consenting adults in private in the Australian Capital Territory (or ACT, the region in which Australia's national capital, Canberra, is located, controlled by the federal government) was endorsed by the house, though as it was an expression of opinion only it produced no change to the law.²³ In calling for a conscience vote, Whitlam and others implied that homosexuality was a question of private morality, not a matter of equal rights. Yet with the important exception of abortion law reform, this was not the ALP's policy in relation to women's rights, many of which challenged the traditional public/private split.²⁴ The ALP had responded to women's demands for rights and protections based on their oppression in the private sphere with new welfare programs and services for women such as women's refuges.²⁵ Whitlam's argument that homosexual rights were a matter for the personal judgment of MPs made it difficult for gays and lesbians to make public claims to rights as citizens on the basis of their sexuality.²⁶

However, while homosexual law reform was not achieved during the Whitlam government, the Royal Commission on Human Relationships provided some groups of gays and lesbians with a valuable platform from which to advocate for decriminalization of homosexuality, social visibility, and homosexual rights. The hearings and final recommendations of the commission challenged the political relegation of homosexuality to the

²¹ Graham Willett, "We Blew Our Trumpets and . . . ': The ATC Homosexual Law Reform Society," in *Out Here: Gay and Lesbian Perspectives VI*, ed. Yorick Smaal and Graham Willett (Clayton: Monash University Publishing, 2011), 1–16, quote at 2. In 1967, as justice minister, Trudeau made this comment when he introduced legislation to decriminalize homosexuality in Canada, arguing that the state should not legislate on matters of personal morality. Canada decriminalized homosexuality in 1969.

²² ABC News, "Timeline: 22 Years between First and Last States Decriminalising Male Homosexuality," 24 August 2015, <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-08-24/timeline-australian-states-decriminalise-male-homosexuality/6719702>, accessed 15 April 2017.

²³ Willett, *Living Out Loud*, 97.

²⁴ Johnson, "From Morality to Equality," 3.

²⁵ Marilyn Lake, *Getting Equal: The History of Australian Feminism* (St. Leonards: Allen and Unwin, 1999), 257.

²⁶ Ibid.

“private” and offered clear recommendations on gay and lesbian rights. Between 1973 and 1978, a period that historian Graham Willett suggests has been viewed as one of “decline, even quiescence” for the gay movement in Australia, the commission was one of many government inquiries that provided gay activists with a platform to make themselves and their demands heard.²⁷ By making submissions to these inquiries, gay and lesbian Australians resisted the containment of homosexuality to the private sphere.

The Royal Commission on Human Relationships emerged from the Whitlam government’s failed attempt to reform abortion law in the ACT in early 1973. After women’s groups, especially the newly established liberal feminist group the Women’s Electoral Lobby (WEL), had campaigned in support of the ALP in the 1972 election, activists and political commentators regarded the attempt to reform abortion law as both a reward for this support and new recognition of women as a Labor constituency.²⁸ Nonetheless, despite majority community support for some relaxation of the law (a 1973 poll suggested that around 64 percent of Australians favored abortion in certain circumstances), the attempt was doomed.²⁹ There was vocal opposition from well-organized antiabortion groups, and the (all-male) parliamentary debate quickly hardened into a stalemate.³⁰ An inquiry into the practice and incidence of abortion was proposed by Labor MP Race Matthews as a way to resolve the deadlock. The ALP was in a difficult position: while a number of the party’s MPs supported reform, there was a significant number of Catholic MPs who were implacably opposed, so an inquiry into abortion was politically unacceptable. However, legislation authorizing a more broad-ranging investigation into “the family, social, educational, legal and sexual aspects of male and female relationships,” with particular attention to the concept of “responsible parenthood,” was passed by the Parliament on 24 April 1974 and formally established on 21 August that same year.³¹

Shepherded into existence by Whitlam’s women’s affairs advisor, Elizabeth Reid, the commission was a feminist project, even if some feminists, like Sydney Women’s Liberation and CAMP NSW activist Sue Wills, regarded the commission as a mere “consolation prize” that was unlikely to unseat the idea that abortion was a matter for an MP’s “conscience” rather than a woman’s right.³² The composition of the parliament in this period meant

²⁷ Willett, *Living Out Loud*, 110.

²⁸ Marian Sawer with Gail Radford, *Making Women Count: A History of the Women’s Electoral Lobby* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2008), 33.

²⁹ Katharine Betts, “Attitudes to Abortion in Australia: 1972 to 2003,” *People and Place* 12, no. 4 (2004): 22–28.

³⁰ Around thirteen thousand pieces of antiabortion correspondence were sent to MPs during the debate. P. McElliott to G. Yeend, “Anti Abortion Campaign,” 2 May 1973, MS9262, series 16, box 54, Papers of Elizabeth Reid, National Library of Australia.

³¹ Evatt, Arnott, and Deveson, *Interim Report*, 6.

³² Sue Wills, interview by the author, 4 December 2012.

that a conscience vote was almost guaranteed to prevent change to the law. However, Reid also worked to expand the commission's purview beyond its original terms of reference into an inquiry that she hoped would "educate, inform and sensitize" the community as a whole about the spectrum of human relationships.³³ The commission's earliest working title was the Commission of Inquiry into Male and Female Relationships, reflecting the parliamentary debate's emphasis on reproductive heterosexuality. However, by June 1974 Reid insisted that the commission had a wider purpose, suggesting that "there have been many other commissions looking into the more tangible problems of discrimination against women, [but] the significance of this commission is that it will be required to look into social problems the very existence of which we are reluctant to admit, the extent of which we have no knowledge, but which affect, and in many cases quite adversely, . . . almost every other person in our community."³⁴ Reid also argued for a less heteronormative title and function for the commission—not an investigation of "male and female relationships" but an inquiry into "human relationships." Reid was thus able to open the commission to the possibility of hearing a more diverse range of experiences. But while this opened the door for gay and lesbian activists, if they chose to engage with the state this way, they would need to craft a useful strategy to make their claims. Most chose to adopt a language of citizenship rather than of liberation.

The Royal Commission on Human Relationships was just one of seventy-three inquiries and thirteen royal commissions initiated by Labor between 1973 and 1975. The expansion of government activity at this level might be best gauged by the fact that there had been just four royal commissions in the preceding ten years.³⁵ Utilized in Australia as in the United Kingdom, Canada, and some other former British colonies, a royal commission is a large-scale public inquiry established by government but conducted by independent appointees, who investigate specific issues in order to inform policy or legal reform or to inquire into extraordinary incidents. While royal commissions are officially created to conduct independent investigations and to make unbiased recommendations, George Gilligan argues that they can also be used to legitimate government action or manage a political crisis.³⁶ The Royal Commission on Human Relationships was unusual in its attention to the "private" sphere of sexuality and intimate life, because most Australian royal commissions have been concerned with issues of public policy, crime, trade, and security. However, the 1903 royal commission into the decline of the birthrate was an important precursor, an

³³ Elizabeth Reid to Prime Minister Whitlam, 5 June 1974, series 16, box 68, Reid Papers.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Nicholas Brown, "Government, Law and Citizenship," in Bashford and Macintyre, *The Commonwealth of Australia*, 421.

³⁶ George Gilligan, "Royal Commissions of Inquiry," *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Criminology* 35, no. 3 (2002): 289–90.

inquiry into sexuality that was premised on a heteronormative citizenship and determined to encourage reproduction.³⁷

The Royal Commission on Human Relationships can also be situated as part of a transnational series of inquiries examining the economic and social consequences of women's increasing entry into the paid workforce, such as the US president's Commission on the Status of Women (1963), the New Zealand Committee on Women's Rights (1973), and the Canadian Royal Commission into the Status of Women, which released its report between 1967 and 1970 and which received press coverage in Australia.³⁸ The Royal Commission on Human Relationships' stated purpose was to address the challenges to private life imposed by rapid social and technological change, particularly the women's, youth, and homosexual movements. Commissioner Anne Deveson explained that the commission was intended to "make recommendations to the Australian government which would help our institutions and policies reflect the reality of contemporary life."³⁹

The commission's terms of reference emphasized reproductive heterosexuality, reflecting the commission's genesis in the abortion debate. There were also clauses on the state's role in the provision of women's sexual and maternal health services, family planning services, sex education, pressures on women in relation to unplanned pregnancies, the availability of childcare, services for disabled children, and women's status in the community more broadly.⁴⁰ While the commission was initiated by a progressive Labor government, it represented a form of politics that could not easily be accounted for by the traditional divide between Left and Right. The feminist and gay rights movements made claims on the state that could transcend this binary or create new tensions within established political parties, particularly for the Labor Party, which had close connections to the trade union movement. The Commission chair, Justice Elizabeth Evatt, gestured to the disruptive potential of this politics when she later reflected that the commission "was concerned with the [lives] of those who had no unions to speak for them."⁴¹

³⁷ Lisa Featherstone, *Let's Talk about Sex: Histories of Sexuality in Australia from Federation to the Pill* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2011), 21–22.

³⁸ For an overview of the Canadian case, see Joan Sangster, "Words of Experience / Experiencing Words: Reading Working Women's Letters to Canada's Royal Commission on the Status of Women," in *Through Feminist Eyes: Essays on Canadian Women's History*, ed. Joan Sangster (Edmonton: Athabasca University Press, 2011), 359–90. An example of Australian press coverage can be found in Ron Collister, "Canada Moves to Improve the Status of Women," *Canberra Times*, 23 December 1972. In the 1972 Australian election, then prime minister William McMahon had promised to hold a Royal Commission into the Status of Women, but he said that it would not consider the question of abortion. See David Solomon, "No Free Vote on Abortion Issue," *Canberra Times*, 21 November 1972.

³⁹ Anne Deveson, *Australians at Risk* (Stanmore: Cassell Australia, 1978), 4.

⁴⁰ Evatt, Arnott, and Deveson, *Interim Report*, 36.

⁴¹ Elizabeth Evatt in Ann Curthoys, A. W. Martin, and Tim Rowse, eds., *Australians from 1939* (Broadway: Fairfax, Syme and Weldon Associates, 1987), 413.

The royal commission embodied the women's liberation slogan "the personal is political" with its focus on the harms people suffered in private, and commission members paid particular attention to women, children, the elderly, the disabled, and gays and lesbians. Feminist activists in this period sought to expose and critique the opposition and separation of the public and the private both in theory and in practice. The public/private split is deeply gendered, as Pateman has shown; the "sexual contract" that shapes both the private and public spheres has historically oppressed women and children, and the individual right to privacy was in practice only available to male heads of households.⁴² Critiquing the notion that what happens in private is beyond the realm of politics was central to second-wave feminism.⁴³ The royal commission's recommendations blurred and troubled this boundary between public and private in its articulation of a new regime of protections and rights for these citizens, for example, in recommending that the state fund refuges for women fleeing violent husbands or partners.⁴⁴ It also revealed the ways that some gays and lesbians were mobilizing private experience to make claims in the public sphere in a way that was characteristic of what Jeffrey Weeks and others would describe as a form of sexual citizenship.

SEXUAL CITIZENS AND THE SEVENTIES STATE

As I noted above, the term "sexual citizenship" emerged in the 1990s to describe the emergence of a sexual politics that deployed the language of citizenship in campaigns for equality and social justice for different social groups on the basis of sexuality.⁴⁵ As Richardson notes, the term was initially used in two main ways: to describe the ways that different social groups make claims for rights in the specific language of gender or sexual difference, and to highlight the ways that sexuality is implicated in the ways that all citizenship rights are distributed.⁴⁶ In this regard, it is important to note, in the words of David Bell and Jon Binnie, that "all citizenship is sexual citizenship."⁴⁷ Jeffrey Weeks uses the term to describe the strategies of both the women's and gay liberation movements of the 1970s. He suggests that these movements had two characteristic elements. First, he suggests that

⁴² Pateman, *The Sexual Contract*. Susan Moller Okin underscores the gendered nature of the right to privacy in "Gender, the Public and the Private," in *Political Theory Today*, ed. David Held (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1991), 70.

⁴³ Okin, "Gender," 76–77.

⁴⁴ Elizabeth Evatt, Felix Arnott, and Anne Deveson, *Royal Commission on Human Relationships, Final Report* (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1977), 1:115.

⁴⁵ Richardson, "Rethinking Sexual Citizenship," 208–11.

⁴⁶ Diane Richardson, "Constructing Sexual Citizenship: Theorizing Sexual Rights," *Critical Social Policy* 20, no. 1 (2000): 107.

⁴⁷ David Bell and Jon Binnie, *The Sexual Citizen: Queer Politics and Beyond* (Cambridge: Polity, 2000), 10. For a specific historical example, see also Margot Canaday, *The Straight State: Sexuality and Citizenship in Twentieth Century America* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009).

there was a moment of reinventing the self and claiming a public identity on the basis of sexuality. Second, he argues that there was a “moment of citizenship”: making a claim to inclusion and to equal access and rights on the basis of that sexual identity. The “sexual citizen,” he suggests, was a “hybrid being” produced by intimate life and involvement with the wider society that seeks to broaden “the definition of belonging.”⁴⁸ Sexual citizenship remains a deeply contested term, and many scholars have highlighted the ways that making claims for rights in this way can forge new boundaries of exclusion and inclusion. Scholars such as Lisa Duggan and Michael Warner, for example, have suggested that sexual citizenship has extracted a high political cost in the United States, “normalizing” previously marginalized identities to produce a depoliticized, neoliberal “homonormativity.”⁴⁹ However, examining sexual citizenship claims in a historical context to see how they initially developed in response to Australia’s expanding social democratic state can reveal the possibilities and limitations of a state-oriented activist politics that challenged the heteronormativity of contemporary Australian citizenship.

The emergence of women’s liberation produced new understandings of citizenship for women, but unlike gay and lesbian activists, feminists were working within and against an established citizenship for women, the maternal citizens. Maternal citizenship was a citizen identity adopted by many white women in the first half of the twentieth century: mothers, they argued, should be recognized publicly as rights-bearing political subjects in recognition of their reproductive work on behalf of the nation.⁵⁰ Maternal citizenship gave Australian feminists a language to articulate their claims on the state, even if these claims did not always succeed.⁵¹ In the 1970s feminists challenged the reproductive compact upon which maternal citizenship was premised as women increasingly argued that they had the right to avoid motherhood altogether or that the state had a role to play in alleviating some of the burdens of motherhood through state-provided childcare, for example.⁵² Women’s citizenship claims were also tightly bound up with the strategic disclosure of private suffering in public: women’s articulation of private experiences in public challenged the notion that intimacy—and

⁴⁸ Jeffrey Weeks, “The Sexual Citizen,” *Theory, Culture and Society* 15, no. 3 (1998): 36–37.

⁴⁹ Lisa Duggan, “The New Homonormativity: The Sexual Politics of Neoliberalism,” in *Materializing Democracy: Toward a Revitalized Cultural Politics*, ed. Russ Castronovo and Dana Nelson (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002), 179; Michael Warner, *The Trouble with Normal: Sex, Politics and the Ethics of Queer Life* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 41–80.

⁵⁰ Marilyn Lake, “Childbearers as Rights-Bearers: Feminist Discourse on the Rights of Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal Mothers in Australia, 1920–50,” *Women’s History Review* 8, no. 2 (1999): 351.

⁵¹ Lake, *Getting Equal*, 98–109.

⁵² Catherine Kevin, “Maternity and Freedom: Australian Feminist Encounters with the Reproductive Body,” *Australian Feminist Studies* 20, no. 46 (2005): 4.

its attendant inequities—was properly contained within the private sphere. Like feminists, homosexual activists in the 1970s also challenged the legitimacy of the public/private divide, but unlike feminists, they did not have an established relationship with the state upon which to draw when they began to organize and agitate for change.

When agitation for the reform of laws regarding homosexuality began in the late 1960s, proponents employed the rhetoric and arguments of the Wolfenden report, as noted above, with its call for the decriminalization of homosexual acts between “consenting adults in private.” This argument stemmed from a liberal insistence that the state had no place in the bedrooms of its citizens—that private sexual behavior was a matter of individual, not social, concern.⁵³ By the 1970s, however, activists in both the women’s and homosexual rights movements sought to expose the impact of oppressive practices and policies on the private sphere, and they thus effectively invited the state into the bedroom in order to seek the state’s protection. Australian homosexual activists in the early 1970s were mainly clustered in two organizations: the gay and lesbian liberal reformers of the Campaign Against Moral Persecution (CAMP, founded in late 1970) and the more radical Gay Liberation (founded two years later). While both organizations were relatively small, their articulation of a homosexual political subjectivity had broader political, social, and cultural effects. Not only did their activism demonstrate the existence of homosexual people as “ordinary” members of the community, it also created a set of public, activist languages around political subjectivity for homosexuals, which in turn shaped nonactivist discourses.⁵⁴ CAMP and Gay Liberation’s activism also influenced the ways that the state framed and responded to homosexuals. The lives of gay men and lesbians in Australia had long been shaped by the heteronormative state, especially through criminal law. While the language of maternal citizenship offered women a long-standing relationship to the state that they could either mobilize or repudiate in order to make claims upon the state, homosexuality’s covert and legally uncertain status meant that gays and lesbians needed to invent a language of rights. They needed to find ways to challenge the public/private split and a language through which to make claims on the state.

Visibility was a crucial first step. Early CAMP activists performed “ordinariness” in carefully staged appearances in the national print and broadcast media, stressing that their sexuality was almost incidental to their identity and that they were otherwise “normal”: founding member Christabel Poll remarked in 1971 that “we wish to arrive at a situation where people’s sexual and emotional preferences are no more relevant than the colour of their eyes.”⁵⁵ This position, Reynolds notes, quickly

⁵³ Willett, *Living Out Loud*, 22.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 39.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 45.

changed as CAMP members began describing coming out as the signature act of the newly political homosexual subject: the “open” homosexual was imagined as “free” and “real.”⁵⁶ Gay Liberation, a less structured group that broke away from CAMP, developed more radical positions on the ways that ideas about sexuality organized society. In his groundbreaking book *Homosexual*, published in 1971, leading gay liberationist and Australian academic Dennis Altman offered a wide-ranging social critique that insisted on the centrality of sexuality to individual identity and society as a whole. Altman later noted that from early in the movement’s history, tensions emerged between Gay Liberation’s goal of “liberating the homosexual in everyone” and CAMP’s strategy of “strengthening a new minority which would inevitably cement artificial tensions between ‘gay’ and ‘straight.’”⁵⁷ Returning to those definitions of sexual citizenship I noted earlier, CAMP could be seen as creating space for gays and lesbians to make claims on the state, while Gay Liberation questioned the ways that sexuality was implicated in the distribution of citizenship rights more broadly. It is important to note, however, that while the struggle between these two visions of gay politics shaped male homosexual identities in the 1970s, it had less impact on lesbian culture and subjectivity because of CAMP’s and Gay Liberation’s failure to attract or retain lesbian members.⁵⁸ Many lesbians were attracted to the women’s liberation movement by its critique of patriarchy and the “new feminist assumption that sexual pleasure was women’s right,” though many would later be unhappy with the heteronormative assumptions of feminist groups like the Women’s Electoral Lobby and formed their own lesbian feminist groups.⁵⁹

By the mid-1970s, however, much of the energy and momentum of the gay liberation movement had been depleted not just in Australia but also in the United States, the UK, and Canada. This had to do with the rise of a commercial gay scene, but it was also a consequence of increasing social acceptance of homosexuality and the push for its decriminalization. In 1967 just 22 percent of Australians were in favor of decriminalization, but by 1974 54 percent of Australians supported it.⁶⁰ As Stephen Angelides notes, by the mid-1970s Australian “interest groups concerned with practical issues and reforms replaced organizations with utopian revolutionary aspirations of wholesale social change.”⁶¹ Such activism remained largely focused on questions of law reform, education, and discrimination. By the time the royal

⁵⁶ Reynolds, *From Camp to Queer*, 55. Also see Willett, *Living Out Loud*, chap. 3.

⁵⁷ Dennis Altman, *Defying Gravity: A Political Life* (St. Leonards: Allen and Unwin, 1997), 68.

⁵⁸ Rebecca Jennings, *Unnamed Desires: A Sydney Gay and Lesbian History* (Clayton: Monash University Publishing, 2015), 80.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 84–87. On women’s liberation and sexual pleasure, see Lake, *Getting Equal*, 242–45.

⁶⁰ Willett, *Living Out Loud*, 111.

⁶¹ Angelides, “The Continuing Homosexual Offensive,” 176.

commission began its public hearings in late 1974, only South Australia had begun the process of decriminalizing male homosexuality, initially by permitting a “consenting adults in private” defense to those charged with homosexual offenses and fully decriminalized homosexuality in 1975.

The increasingly reform-oriented nature of gay activism in mid-1970s Australia was also strongly influenced by the election of the Whitlam government. While the progressive Whitlam was elected on a wave of optimism about progressive social change, his election defused much of this radical energy. Even after the motion supporting the decriminalization of “homosexual acts between consenting adults in private” was passed by parliament in 1973, the Whitlam government did not enact any decriminalization legislation before it was voted out in late 1975.⁶² Yet as Graham Willett points out, although Whitlam’s election had dampedened some of the gay movement’s radical energy, it also granted homosexuals greater access to the state, particularly through committees of inquiry.⁶³ The rise of the “femocrat,” feminists working inside government bureaucracy on women’s policy, also coincided with and shaped changes in gay politics. Just as feminists debated whether the femocrats’ “fandango” with the state was a canny way to advance women’s interests or a form of state co-optation,⁶⁴ so too there were debates in gay and lesbian politics about the extent to which gay politics should concern itself with lobbying and engaging directly with political parties and government. By the mid-1970s the gay rights movement was fragmenting into a series of small special interest groups, many of which were uninterested in political reform.⁶⁵ However, CAMP New South Wales (NSW, Australia’s most populous state) produced numerous submissions to various government inquiries like the Royal Commission on Human Relationships. Of this closer orientation toward the state in gay activism in this period, Willett points out that “policy work had become possible because of the movement’s success in making homosexuality a legitimate social and political issue and homosexuals legitimate spokespeople for these issues; it had become necessary because of the decline in opportunities for more radical political action.”⁶⁶ The Royal Commission on Human Relationships in 1974 was one important interaction between an expansive social democratic state and a group of gay and lesbian activists who saw a tactical and strategic advantage to engaging with the state and making claims for rights—to achieve legal and policy reforms to improve

⁶² Willett, *Living Out Loud*, 97–98.

⁶³ Ibid., 110.

⁶⁴ Sara Dowse, “The Women’s Movement’s Fandango with the State: Some Thoughts on the Movement’s Role in Public Policy since 1972,” *Australian Quarterly* 54, no. 4 (1982): 324–45. On feminist debates over the “femocrat” strategy, see Suzanne Franzway, Diane Court, and R. W. Connell, *Staking a Claim: Feminism, Bureaucracy and the State* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1989), 133–55.

⁶⁵ Willett, *Living Out Loud*, 110, 118.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 18.

the lives of homosexuals. So in this climate, how did gay men and lesbians frame their claims on the state in their submissions and testimonies to the Royal Commission on Human Relationships?

The gay men and lesbians who addressed the commission used two main strategies. First, they sought access to the commission as a public forum, as a public space through which they could narrate their experiences and frame their demands for change. Second, they framed their testimonies as a series of claims on the state that drew on conventional understandings of citizenship while also making claims to sexual citizenship. Not only did they point out the ways in which Australian citizenship was underpinned by reproductive heterosexuality, the activists also insisted they were entitled to equal citizen rights, deploying their private experiences in order to support these claims. As we will see, several witnesses argued that the forced confinement of their homosexuality to the private sphere was oppressive and that seeking a public identity as homosexual was crucial to their claims to citizenship. The evidence of these submissions reveals tangled and multiple sets of understandings of the state, its roles, and its possibilities. Their submissions frequently invoked the power of the state (at a time when Whitlam was seeking to expand and redefine it), making claims for inclusion and representation based on their public status as citizens, even as they sought to undermine the public/private divide.

WHAT DO YOU THINK? SUBMISSIONS AND TESTIMONIES

The commission was established on 21 August 1974, and it began formal hearings in early November that year. The terms of reference were broad and interconnected, and they demanded a range of research strategies on the part of commission members.⁶⁷ At every stage, the public was invited to contribute: pamphlets and print and radio advertisements asked Australians “what do you think?” about a range of social, cultural, and sexual issues.⁶⁸ In response, the commission received more than twelve hundred written submissions on a very wide range of issues, including abortion, corporal punishment in schools, family violence, gay and lesbian life, rural isolation, disability, and parenting. The commission held public hearings where both experts and “ordinary” people gave testimony. Informal “open house” sessions were held where people could speak to a representative of the commission about any issue of concern. Commission staff visited sports fields, shopping centers, and community halls to speak to people about their experiences. They aimed for inclusiveness and diversity and sought to communicate the work of the commission as broadly as possible through the print and broadcast media. State inquiries to gather evidence from ordinary people were not entirely new: early in the twentieth century, inquiries into

⁶⁷ Evatt, Arnott, and Deveson, *Interim Report*, 9–14.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 39–42.

wage levels also produced collections of personal testimonies with the intention of assisting the state to make decisions governing the public world of work.⁶⁹ The 1925 Royal Commission on Health heard middle-class women's suggestions for reforms to boost national fertility, and the 1944 National Health and Medical Research Commission of Inquiry invited the public to "state the reasons for limiting their families"; it received more than fourteen hundred letters in response.⁷⁰ Yet the Royal Commission on Human Relationships was new in its acceptance of nonreproductive identities and in its emphasis on the suffering and unhappiness within (and outside) family and intimate life. The commission's implicit acceptance of a diversity of human relationships made it possible for gays and lesbians to insist that their experiences needed to be taken into consideration.

Homosexuality was quickly established as one of the subjects in the commission's ambit. On the first day of public hearings in November 1974, three gay men—including CAMP NSW secretary and secondary schoolteacher Mike Clohesy—were among the large group of people who turned up to give evidence. In their brief introductory statements, each man stressed the existence of homosexuals in society and their intention of gaining greater visibility through testifying. Martin Smith of the Jewish gay group Chutzpah said that he planned to submit evidence that "male and female homosexual relationships exist and that they are as valid and as fulfilling as those involving heterosexuals but that societal pressures on human relationships differ from those placed on heterosexual relationships."⁷¹ Leon Protius from the Catholic homosexual group Acceptance stressed representativeness as grounds for making a submission: "We wish to point out that as homosexuals we represent approximately 5 per cent of the population."⁷² Clohesy, representing CAMP NSW, offered a more far-ranging analysis of the ways patriarchy oppressed homosexuals: "The male dominant ethic of this society and the sex role playing which is encouraged by this society are the main forces shaping [human] relationships. We will also show that the definition of the family should be extended so that the alternative life-styles will be accepted."⁷³ Smith's and Clohesy's emphasis on relationships signaled a challenge to reproductive citizenship models just as it also offered up a more respectable homosexuality for recognition by the state. Almost all the gay men who spoke at the first hearing were members of gay organizations; most

⁶⁹ See, for example, Mark Hearn, "Making Liberal Citizens: Justice Higgins and His Witnesses," *Labour History* 93 (2007): 57–72.

⁷⁰ Alison McKinnon, "Bringing the Unclothed Immigrant into the World: Population Policies and Gender in Twentieth Century Australia," *Journal of Population Research* 17, no. 2 (2000): 114, 117.

⁷¹ Commonwealth Reporting Service, *Royal Commission on Human Relationships: Official Transcript of Proceedings*, 6 November 1974, 1:8.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 1:11.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 1:16.

articulated a politics of liberal reform and insisted that the commission acknowledge homosexual oppression.

Following their appearance at the commission's opening session, CAMP members assembled a working group to prepare a written submission. CAMP rationalized this engagement with the state as worthwhile because, as an anonymous writer in the group's newsletter, *CAMP Ink*, reasoned, "preparation of a submission . . . brings together a group of people . . . to collectively work out the forces and values causing its oppression and to find ways of changing a society which is not able to cope with more than one lifestyle."⁷⁴ The thirty-page document, *Homosexuals and Human Relationships*, addressed each of the commission's terms of reference through a critique of dominant family structures and heteronormative gender roles. It argued that "the only family unit given full recognition by society at the moment is the nuclear family. . . . [H]omosexual families, so far as society is concerned, do not exist."⁷⁵ Recognizing the fundamental role that ideas about family played in distributing the benefits of citizenship, CAMP argued that "what is necessary is a re-definition of the family to mean: a group of people, however constituted, which considers itself a family," meaning that "the current benefits accruing to nuclear families would extend to all families."⁷⁶ In a demand that preempted the commission's emphasis on education in its recommendations, CAMP also pushed greater visibility for homosexuals through education about sexuality in medical and nurse training programs and in schools. Such programs, CAMP hoped, would "present the validity of the homosexual life style."⁷⁷ While CAMP's demands included decriminalization, it issued a broader call to repeal all laws relating to sexual conduct in favor of a single law criminalizing sexual conduct only in situations where "assault, threats or coercion are used."⁷⁸ While earlier in the decade CAMP, the older political group, advocated liberal reform premised on a stable and public homosexual identity and the more radical Gay Liberation sought to blur the boundaries between gay and straight, by 1974 CAMP was advocating "liberation" for homosexuals: liberation from oppressive laws and social attitudes and freedom to live a homosexual "lifestyle."⁷⁹ Yet by the time CAMP wrote its submission in 1974, it had adopted the rhetoric of liberation to argue for the removal of the legal and social barriers to a coherent and stable gay subjectivity and citizenship.⁸⁰

⁷⁴ "CAMP's Submission to the Royal Commission on Human Relationships," *CAMP Ink* 4, no. 4/5 (1975): 14.

⁷⁵ CAMP NSW, *Homosexuals and Human Relationships* (Sydney: CAMP NSW, 1975), 9, 12.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 25.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 23.

⁷⁹ Reynolds, *From Camp to Queer*, 74.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 134.

What happened next served as proof of the urgency of CAMP's demands. CAMP members Peter de Waal and Mike Clohesy appeared on the television program *A Current Affair* to publicize the submission on 8 October 1975. Clohesy worked as a high school teacher at a Catholic boys' school in Sydney, and his television appearance prompted complaints from parents about the presence of "a declared homosexual" in the school, leading to his firing just days after the program went on the air. An article in *CAMP Ink* claimed that he was sacked not for being a homosexual "but for stating the fact publicly."⁸¹ The church similarly justified the firing by claiming that it was "for his public attitude, not private morality."⁸² According to this logic, had Clohesy kept his homosexuality "private," his job would have been safe: this was the logic of Wolfenden and the early Australian decriminalization campaigns, but in contrast, gay activists insisted he had the right to both a public homosexual identity and his job.⁸³ After they had made their written submission to the commission, members of CAMP NSW were scheduled to give testimony on 19 November 1975. The commission had previously notified the Catholic Education Office of its intention to hear evidence from Clohesy about his dismissal. Both Clohesy and gay activist Dennis Altman were waiting to give evidence (Altman on homosexuality and sex education) that morning when the NSW Catholic Education Office made a surprise submission, challenging the commission's power "to inquire into homosexual conduct and behaviour."⁸⁴ The office suggested that the commission's terms of reference did not offer a warrant to "inquire into male and male relationships or female and female relationships," arguing that the "human relationships" in the terms of reference were, in fact, "human relationships of a man and woman together."⁸⁵ The church's legal counsel argued that because the commission's terms of reference emphasized responsible parenthood, this too excluded the possibility of hearing evidence about gays and lesbians, since "there is no question of parenthood relating to the male-male relationship or the female-female relationship."⁸⁶ The church also sought to prevent Clohesy from giving evidence about his sacking on the grounds that education employment in Australia was largely the responsibility of the states, and the commission was limited to issues concerning the Commonwealth.

The commissioners were required to rule on this challenge to the commission's scope and range. The commissioners and the assisting legal counsel, Jane Mathews, stated that they believed that the "terms are wide enough

⁸¹ "Oppression: A Case History," *Camp Ink* 5, no. 1 (1975): 5.

⁸² Alan Gill, "Catholic Move to Stop CAMP Evidence," *Sydney Morning Herald*, 20 November 1975.

⁸³ Clare Parker and Paul Sendziuk, "It's Time: The Duncan Case and the Decriminalization of Homosexual Acts in South Australia, 1972," in Smaal and Willett, *Out Here*, 17–35.

⁸⁴ Evatt, Arnott, and Deveson, *Interim Report*, 43.

⁸⁵ Commonwealth Reporting Service, *Official Transcript*, 8 December 1975, 8:2554.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 8:2546.

to cover this so far as it is relevant to an individual sphere.”⁸⁷ Nonetheless, Clohesy and Altman were prevented from giving evidence until the commission convened a dedicated hearing on 8 December 1975. Mathews responded to the church’s motion, and Clohesy and Altman appeared in person to speak against it, arguing that homosexuality did fall within the commission’s terms of reference. Ultimately, Commissioner Elizabeth Evatt ruled that the commission could hear testimony about homosexuality.⁸⁸ The challenge was significant because if it had succeeded, gays and lesbians would have been excluded from making submissions and testimonies to the commission. The debate to resolve the challenge offered a microcosm of the politics of homosexuality and national belonging in mid-1970s Australia. The arguments made by gay activists foreshadowed many of the claims other gay men and women would make in their submissions to the commission.

The Catholic Church’s lawyers were insisting that homosexuality be viewed not as an identity but as a private act sealed away from the public sphere of citizenship and nation and hence outside the inquiry. Clohesy and Altman, however, troubled the boundary between public and private when they argued that homosexuality was indeed relevant because homosexuals were citizens and part of public life, even if they were oppressed and marginalized. Clohesy used a language of inclusion, suggesting that the “family, social, educational, legal and sexual” aspects of human relationships all related to homosexual relationships and that the CAMP submission was organized around these themes. Similarly, he rejected the church’s assertion that there was “no question of parenthood” relating to gay men and women, suggesting that “many homosexuals are natural parents and many seek to become parents.”⁸⁹ In relation to the focus on unplanned pregnancies, Clohesy again sought to emphasize the ways in which gays and lesbians shared social and sexual similarities with heterosexuals: “Homosexual women are capable of falling pregnant; homosexual men are capable of fathering children.”⁹⁰ He insisted that he had a right to speak about his sacking because it revealed the need for the state to protect the rights of homosexuals. Altman too stressed the fact that, contrary to the church’s assertion that there was “no question of parenthood” for gay relationships, there are “homosexual parents, and homosexuals do themselves have parents,” and he suggested the commission consider the possibility that “known homosexuals” might be able to adopt children, as was already the case in some other countries.⁹¹ While insisting that gay men and lesbians did, in fact, have “human relationships,” Altman argued that homosexuals were citizens and thus subject to the rights and protections of the Commonwealth government. There were many areas of

⁸⁷ Ibid., 8:2544.

⁸⁸ Evatt, Arnott, and Deveson, *Interim Report*, 27.

⁸⁹ Commonwealth Reporting Service, *Official Transcript*, 8:2744.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 8:2745.

⁹¹ Ibid., 8:2741.

federal authority that had “implications for homosexuals,” he wrote, including the laws related to tax, the armed forces, marriage, broadcasting, and control of the ABC (the Australian Broadcasting Commission, Australia’s national public broadcaster).⁹² Thus Altman insisted on both the familial and citizenship positions of homosexuals in contemporary Australia. The image of the respectable, taxpaying homosexual citizen would reappear in testimonies to the commission, as would that of the homosexual family. The commissioners ultimately ruled that homosexuality was within the scope of their inquiry, arguing that it was not possible to exclude “the effect of homosexuality on the individual’s ability to form family, social and sexual relationships. These matters are themselves dependent to a large extent on current social attitudes to homosexuality and to the position of the homosexual in society.”⁹³ With this ruling, the stage was set to hear the testimonies of many other gay men and women.

TESTIFYING ABOUT HOMOSEXUALITY

Of the more than twelve hundred submissions that the commission ultimately received, thirty-nine dealt with homosexuality and have yet to be examined by historians. While this represents a relatively small percentage of the overall submissions, the fact that homosexuality was not explicitly mentioned in the commission’s terms of reference means that these submissions provide important evidence of gays’ and lesbians’ desire to participate in the inquiry and their determination to have their experiences considered. These submissions are further evidence of a state-oriented gay and lesbian activism in the mid-1970s, a period, as I have noted, often regarded as one of decline or stasis in histories of the gay and lesbian movement.⁹⁴ The written submissions have clear limitations as representative evidence: they reflect the views of a self-selected, literate group. Written submissions were intended to help gather evidence from those unrepresented by pressure groups, and they offered respondents the opportunity to articulate their experience in their own words, to invoke their “own personal experiences as meaningful and authoritative evidence for the commission to consider.”⁹⁵ Yet this evidence was carefully framed and mediated, and we need to be cautious about simply accepting it at face value. As Joan Scott famously noted, “Experience is at once always already an interpretation *and* something that needs to be interpreted.”⁹⁶ These submissions offer glimpses of the ways these men and women understood their experiences—and their rights—as

⁹² Ibid., 8:2742.

⁹³ Evatt, Arnott, and Deveson, *Interim Report*, 8.

⁹⁴ Willett, *Living Out Loud*, 110.

⁹⁵ Joan Sangster, “Invoking Experience as Evidence,” *Canadian Historical Review* 92, no. 1 (2011): 137.

⁹⁶ Joan Scott, “The Evidence of Experience,” *Critical Inquiry* 17, no. 4 (1991): 797.

gay and lesbian in 1970s Australia and how they sought to convey this understanding to others. These submissions can reveal the possibilities that writers imagine for themselves and others, because as Penny Summerfield suggests in such cases, “Historical actors, consciously and unconsciously, raid the discursive frameworks within which lived experience takes place, and which shift and evolve over time.”⁹⁷

Several of the submissions were from activist organizations and individuals, and eleven were anonymous, which is unsurprising, given that homosexuality was still illegal in most parts of Australia. Most were from men, possibly because the question of law reform only applied to male homosexuality, but also perhaps due to the underrepresentation of lesbians in homosexual political organizations.⁹⁸ As might be expected, some condemned homosexuality’s growing visibility as evidence of moral decline. One man vehemently argued that homosexuals should not have the right to adopt children and suggested that the increased visibility of homosexuality and the rising divorce rate were evidence that Australians were seeking to abdicate “responsibility to husband, wife, children and even to themselves.”⁹⁹ However, almost all the submissions from gay men and women were framed as being motivated by grievance or anger, and only one man wrote to tell of his happy life as an openly homosexual man. These men and women took the opportunity the commission offered to make claims on the state by narrating their private experiences, challenging and remaking the boundary between public and private, opening up some possibilities, and closing down others. Most witnesses imagined a multifaceted state that produced a range of identities that overlapped and informed each other, and this process can be observed in the multiple registers of the submissions.

I want to examine three main claims that homosexual men and women made on the state in their submissions to the Royal Commission on Human Relationships. Gay men and lesbians made claims in languages of suffering, citizenship, and critique of the nuclear family. These three narratives were not neatly bounded, nor did they represent all varieties of gay and lesbian experience, and several people made use of more than one register. Together, they reveal the ways that homosexual activists of the mid-1970s were beginning to imagine being gay “as a distinct, coherent and encompassing subjectivity” where homosexuality, no longer covert and concealed, underpinned both private and public identity.¹⁰⁰ Speaking to the state in a public forum meant that the activists needed to deploy language with public purchase, particularly given that advocating for decriminalization of

⁹⁷ Penny Summerfield, “Concluding Thoughts: Performance, the Self, and Women’s History,” *Women’s History Review* 22, no. 2 (2013): 351.

⁹⁸ Jennings, *Unnamed Desires*, 79–80.

⁹⁹ Confidential, submission no. 847, 12 February 1976, series M3655/1, folder 285, box 27, Elizabeth Evatt, Records of the Royal Commission on Human Relationships, National Archives of Australia.

¹⁰⁰ Reynolds, *From Camp to Queer*, 157.

homosexuality was still contentious. As I noted earlier, gay politics had also changed by the time these testimonies were being collected in 1974, with the resurgence of reform-oriented activism, and these testimonies support Reynolds's assertion that the "playfulness" of gay liberation's approach to the self was "increasingly replaced with the constraints—and benefits—of imagining gay as a distinct, coherent and encompassing subjectivity."¹⁰¹ The witnesses presented accounts of discrimination, suffering, victimization, and oppression and then laid out ambitious templates for reform. Like many Australian feminists, some gays and lesbians were beginning to look to the state to intervene to protect them from oppression and recognize their rights. They made claims to sexual citizenship by testifying about their public and private experiences of their homosexuality and by highlighting the heteronormative nature of Australian citizenship.

Suffering

The first set of stories homosexuals told the commission were stories of exclusion, hurt, invisibility, and fear. Homosexual men and women told narratives that situated their oppression in the intersection between private and public. In these narratives, to be homosexual in Australia in the mid-1970s was to not be able to express one's private sexual identity in public (or even to one's own family) for fear of prejudice or violence. Oppressive laws and structures enforced this silence. For these witnesses, the state's failure to recognize the reality of homosexual lives in the public sphere (through decriminalization, law, and welfare reforms) effectively erased their existence. Acceptance, the Australian Catholic homosexual group mentioned above, argued that homosexuals in "lasting relationships" ought to be able to marry and "to live their married lives publicly."¹⁰² A lesbian couple from Tasmania also emphasized the publicness of homosexuality, arguing that "homosexuals are not just homosexuals in their bedroom—they are homosexuals every minute of every day they live."¹⁰³ They felt that their homosexuality rendered them socially and legally invisible, and they wanted to speak: "Let us have our say through the media, schools literature etc without being misquoted, misread and badly seen."¹⁰⁴ This was a plea for social and cultural visibility.

However, most felt that such visibility was not yet possible, and fear of "exposure" was a powerful thread in many submissions. Ray Weeks wrote that when he joined the workforce at sixteen "my biggest concern was the fear of instant dismissal if anybody ever 'found out' about my

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Joe Foster and David Weiner, on behalf of Acceptance, submission no. 592, 8 May 1975, folder 285, box 27, Evatt Records.

¹⁰³ Denice Martin, Anne Hazanas with Ken Howard, Steve Oram, submission no. 833, 15 October 1975, folder 285, box 27, Evatt Records.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

homosexuality. . . . [A] homosexual learns to be very careful and watches every word he says. . . . [M]en's attitudes would change if they had been intimidated, threatened, abused, beaten, bashed, robbed and blackmailed as has happened to me in the past.”¹⁰⁵ The corollary to this fear of exposure was constant concealment, and this extracted a high psychological cost, as psychologist Vivienne Cass (who had worked as a counsellor for CAMP) explained: “Homosexual relationships are both negated and ignored by society. . . . [T]he homosexual living in a stable relationship with another is aware of being ignored every time he/she fills out a form requiring marital status to be indicated.”¹⁰⁶ This lack of state recognition of private relationships and identities produced pain and fear, asserted teacher Brian Lindberg: “No matter what a homosexual achieves in life, their sexuality will remain their primary identity. During my life there has always been the constant danger of exposure and blackmail and the fear that everything I have worked so hard professionally to achieve would be destroyed. . . . [H]omosexuals are forced to live double lives. I cannot talk openly about my lover and our wonderful relationship to my colleagues.”¹⁰⁷ The private sphere offered protection and sustenance for these men and women, but being forced to confine their relationships to the public sphere rendered their private identities invisible, as Cass described: “All adults are assumed to be heterosexual. . . . Every day the homosexual is confronted by similar situations that serve to remind him/her of his/her supposed non-existence.”¹⁰⁸ Yet many others were suffering in isolation, according to Cass: “No responsible government, in my opinion, can avoid the fact that there are large numbers of Australian citizens living in misery and fear through no fault of their own; and no responsible government could offer me, or any other homosexual an acceptable rationalization for not acting to correct such an oppressive situation immediately.”¹⁰⁹ Lindberg questioned the singularity and stigmatization of his identity as homosexual—what he called his “primary identity”—while simultaneously seeking public affirmation of this identity by the state. He declared that “no matter what you achieve in life your sexuality is the sole basis of how people judge you. You can still be one of the top people in the country but you are still a homosexual and this is the usual thing.”¹¹⁰ Lindberg stressed that while he had come to accept his homosexuality, it was the state’s failure to acknowledge his sexuality as legitimate that he sought to change. Throughout his testimony he affirmed his sexuality as central to his identity, but in doing so, he also sought to transform its public meaning.

¹⁰⁵ Ray Weeks, submission no. 247, 21 May 1975, folder 283, box 27, Evatt Records.

¹⁰⁶ Vivienne Cass, submission no. 462, undated, folder 285, box 27, Evatt Records.

¹⁰⁷ Brian Lindberg, submission no. 1026, 18 July 1975, folder 285, box 27, Evatt Records.

¹⁰⁸ Cass, submission no. 462.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Commonwealth Reporting Service, *Official Transcript*, 21 August 1975, 6:2117.

While many of these men and women articulated the ways that their sexual identity was bound up with suffering, the inverse of this suffering was hope about the lives they might have in a postreform world. These were narratives of exclusion and suffering that had as their corollary what Jeffrey Weeks describes as sexual citizenship's "demand for inclusion."¹¹¹ One confidential, anonymous submission made a plea for public acceptance: "I am a homosexual, and the love I have to give is as pure and unblemished a thing as any heterosexual's. I want society to give us the right to love openly and live openly together without scorn."¹¹² Ray Weeks, who came out to his family and friends without repercussions (an act he described as "granting homosexuality precedence over all the other factors of my existence"), offered a utopian vision of public sexual identities. Soon, he wrote, "we are going to see a time when Australian men will walk along the street together, holding hands. To help bring this about, is the purpose of my submission to this commission."¹¹³ These stories were calls for legal reform and public acceptance. Gays and lesbians suggested that if homosexuality were decriminalized and their relationships recognized, community attitudes toward homosexuals would change. A sixteen-year-old girl who was living in a country town and engaging in a "homosexual affair" with a classmate told the commissioners: "I hope in what you are trying to achieve you succeed. Please could you do something about homosexuality/bisexuality. I mean, help to make it into an acceptable facet of society."¹¹⁴ A registered psychiatric nurse and mother of a gay son lamented the lack of educational information available to the families of gay men and women, and she pleaded for better education and training across society to help "the individual homosexual with his problem by giving him acceptance and reassurance within the family circle."¹¹⁵

Citizenship and Difference

The second group of narratives gay men and lesbians told to the commission were those of citizenship and difference. In these accounts, gay men and women told a story of a citizenship riven with contradictions. Having withheld equal citizenship rights from homosexuals, these activists argued, the state also failed to provide special entitlements to rectify inequalities, as it had for other groups who had not yet attained equal rights, such as Indigenous people, women, and immigrants. With this argument, the witnesses were responding to the Whitlam government's embrace of what Carol Johnson calls "positive equality," "re-imagining the Australian citizen-subject in a

¹¹¹ Weeks, "The Sexual Citizen," 47.

¹¹² Anonymous, submission no. 417, 12 March 1975, folder 283, box 27, Evatt Records.

¹¹³ Weeks, submission no. 247.

¹¹⁴ Elizabeth Hayes, submission no. 276, undated, folder 283, box 27, Evatt Records.

¹¹⁵ Name withheld, submission no. 605, 17 November 1975, folder 285, box 27, Evatt Records.

far more gender and racially inclusive way.”¹¹⁶ New sources of government funding and new programs to address racial, ethnic, and gender disadvantage were a crucial part of Whitlam’s policy program.¹¹⁷ But as I noted above, Whitlam did not extend positive equality to gays and lesbians. CAMP activist Lex Watson complained in his testimony that “the migrants have ministers, they have special affairs people such as [Al] Grassby, . . . the aborigines obviously have a department; women at least got International Women’s Year . . . and a special advisory person in the Prime Minister’s Department. We have got absolutely nothing. The last thing the governments want to do is to even talk to us.”¹¹⁸ Brian Lindberg complained that homosexuals had no representation in government. He stressed that “non-homosexuals cannot represent the needs of homosexuals,” and he urged the commission to recommend that gay people be encouraged to take part in policy making and party politics.¹¹⁹ Vivienne Cass called for the “appointment of a homosexual advisor[, which would mean that] the government will be in a position to promote positive social change. Without it, such change will be long in coming and even then, at best it can only be piecemeal.”¹²⁰ At times, this claim drew on gay men’s “other” citizen identity, that of a male taxpayer, again highlighting the contradictions contained in these attempts to articulate a homosexual political subjectivity. Gay witness “Ron” (a pseudonym) asserted that the taxes gay people paid “support very often even the law which is oppressive to them and discriminates against them.”¹²¹ Several witnesses implicitly highlighted the ways that the heteronormative male citizen attained privileges from his citizenship, and they used this to argue for their particular needs as homosexual citizens. Brian Lindberg described himself as “a mature and responsible citizen” and argued, “I’m a taxpayer and have received little that supports my life style positively. Libraries carry few books on homosexuality; theatre, cinema, media etc rarely portray homosexuality as an alternative life style. There are no political representatives who will support my life style. I am taxed as a ‘single’ person.”¹²² This call for positive cultural representation was a relatively new demand on the state by gays and lesbians, albeit one that had been used with considerable success by the women’s movement through the cultural funding granted to celebrate International Women’s Year in 1975.¹²³ Lindberg clearly had a similar strategy in mind when he requested that a grant from the “arts

¹¹⁶ Johnson, “Gough Whitlam,” 154.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 160–72.

¹¹⁸ Commonwealth Reporting Service, *Official Transcript*, 11 February 1976, 10:3142.

¹¹⁹ Lindberg, submission no. 1026.

¹²⁰ Cass, submission no. 462.

¹²¹ Commonwealth Reporting Service, *Official Transcript*, 25 February 1976, 10:3217.

¹²² Lindberg, submission no. 1026.

¹²³ On International Women’s Year, see Elizabeth Reid, “The Child of Our Movement: A Movement of Women,” in *Different Lives*, ed. Jocelynne A. Scutt (Ringwood: Penguin, 1987), 9–20.

council" be used to pay for "homosexuals to portray via film, TV, written word or radio etc the homosexual lifestyle as it is—valid and satisfying."¹²⁴ Similarly, the organization Campus Camp, from Queensland, pointed out that because the national broadcaster, the Australian Broadcasting Commission, produced a "women's rights" radio program (*Coming Out, Ready or Not*), "surely half an hour a week could be found for the gays."¹²⁵ Here, activists were trying to call a new political subject into being, mirroring the strategies of many in the women's movement in 1970s Australia. There was debate between activists about the desirable extent of state intervention. Dennis Altman, on the one hand, suggested that "there exists no justification for regarding homosexuality as other than an alternative life style, requiring no more intervention by the state than is true of heterosexuality."¹²⁶ Lex Watson, however, argued that because policy and the law put male homosexuals in second-class positions, "the state had to play a much larger role in order to ameliorate this oppression."¹²⁷

The Nuclear Family

The third set of narratives homosexuals provided to the commission criticized the heteronormative nuclear family, the structure underpinning dominant definitions of citizenship. This was more than an appeal to a listening state: it was a direct challenge to the terms on which the state was constituted. Several submissions stressed that the nuclear family was a "power structure" that reinforced limitations on sex roles and fostered homosexual oppression. One woman argued that "the denigration of homosexuals by society is most immediately done by the family."¹²⁸ Activist Robyn Kennedy testified that "the homosexual life style is an alternative life style seen by society as something outside so-called normal society, outside the family . . . , and therefore is actively opposed by the family as a unit."¹²⁹ Campus Camp argued for legal recognition of homosexual relationships as a "preliminary step toward legal recognition of homosexual 'marriage'" and for the rights of homosexuals to adopt children, even while the organization noted that most "homosexual rights campaigners [are] against the concept of holy matrimony as it exists."¹³⁰ The rights of lesbian mothers became an important issue for lesbian activists in the 1970s in the wake of several divorce cases in which lesbian mothers lost custody of their

¹²⁴ Lindberg, submission no. 1026.

¹²⁵ Campus Camp (QLD), submission no. 430, folder 285, box 27, Evatt Records. On the ABC's *Coming Out, Ready or Not*, see Liz Fell and Carolyn Wenzel, *The Coming Out Show: Twenty Years of Feminist ABC Radio* (Sydney: ABC Books, 1995).

¹²⁶ Dennis Altman, submission no. 654, 3 June 1975, folder 285, box 27, Evatt Records.

¹²⁷ Commonwealth Reporting Service, *Official Transcript*, 11 February 1976, 10:3137.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 10:3195.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 10:3199.

¹³⁰ Campus Camp (QLD), submission no. 430.

children.¹³¹ Other submissions to the commission sought redefinition of the family as an institution that could include homosexuality, pointing out the harm that the conventional definition of family had caused. A lesbian couple noted that their five-year-old daughter “is not allowed in certain people’s places simply because Anne and I are lesbians,” and they commented that “if a lesbian goes into hospital to have a baby her lover can’t be there to help and support her. If her lover was a man, he could, but my lover couldn’t because she is a woman. . . . [T]hese are just a few examples of our daily oppressions.”¹³² This couple rejected legal reform as a means of ameliorating these “daily oppressions,” arguing that “it will merely be putting homosexuals into a heterosexual world based and nurtured on sexism. To eradicate sexism, the whole system as it stands, must change drastically. This would take literally years and years. Yet we must start now!”¹³³ Such determination would be shaken, however, by the dismissal of the Whitlam government, which significantly affected the Royal Commission on Human Relationships.

THE ROYAL COMMISSION’S FINAL REPORT

The Royal Commission on Human Relationships fell victim to the shock dismissal of the Whitlam government in November 1975. In Australia’s bicameral system of government, the two houses of parliament can be controlled by different parties, although the party with the majority in the lower house forms the government. Whitlam had never had a majority in the upper house, and following a series of scandals and missteps, in October 1975 the opposition used its control of the upper house to block supply (the bills that finance government operations). The crisis resulted in a stalemate that was resolved when the governor general took the unprecedented step of dismissing Whitlam’s government and installed the opposition as a caretaker government, pending a general election.¹³⁴ The conservative Liberal-Country Party coalition won the December 1975 election in a landslide, and they cut the commission’s funding and brought its deadline forward by a year.¹³⁵ The commission’s final report was delivered to the government in late 1977. Shortly after, someone in the government leaked a selection of the most controversial recommendations (which included expanding the availability of abortion and the decriminalization of homosexuality)

¹³¹ Rebecca Jennings, “Lesbian Mothers and Child Custody: Australian Debates in the 1970s,” *Gender and History* 24, no. 2 (2012): 502–17.

¹³² Martin, Hazanas with Howard, Oram, submission no. 833.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Strangio, “Instability, 1966–82,” 149–51.

¹³⁵ Michelle Arrow, “Public Intimacies: The Royal Commission on Human Relationships,” in *Acts of Love and Lust: Sexuality in Australia from 1945–2010*, ed. Lisa Featherstone, Rebecca Jennings, and Robert Reynolds (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014), 23–43.

to the press. The final report was crudely characterized as a “sex report,” and its refusal to impose absolute moral standards in relation to sexuality outraged conservatives, while its exposure of the violence and suffering hidden within many Australian homes generated intense controversy and widespread press coverage.¹³⁶

The commission made thirteen direct recommendations on homosexuality in its final, five-volume report. They ranged from the pragmatic—decriminalization of homosexual acts, a suggestion that the public service set an example of nondiscrimination against homosexuals, the inclusion of homosexuality in medical and school sex education programs—to much broader, and vaguer, aspirations, such as the recommendation that “every effort should be made to enable homosexuals to be accepted by society and blackmail and violence against them should be strongly suppressed.”¹³⁷ Clearly, the sexual citizenship claims of gays and lesbians found some purchase, especially through the commission’s stated desire to minimize the harms inflicted on homosexuals through nonrecognition by the state. However, this did not extend to a full endorsement of CAMP’s critique of the heteronormative nuclear family. The commission recommended a new definition of family to “cover not only the conventional nuclear family grouping of mother, father and children but also one-parent families, families where there is no legal marriage, extended families and communes.” Nonetheless, the commission also suggested that “recognition should not be given to homosexual unions as legal marriages, or to allowing homosexual couples to adopt children.”¹³⁸ While the report did not assert that homosexuals were less effective parents than heterosexuals, it suggested that in order to reduce the stress of adjustment, adopted children needed a “typical” (i.e., heterosexual) family.¹³⁹ Same-sex de facto (or common-law) relationships were not granted equal recognition to heterosexual de facto relationships until 2008 in Australia, and same-sex marriage remains illegal as of 2017.¹⁴⁰ It is still illegal in many states for gay and lesbian couples to adopt children.¹⁴¹ The commission’s caution in relation to family recognition is unsurprising, especially in light of the evidence it had received from churches and conservative groups claiming that

¹³⁶ Michelle Arrow, “An Inquiry into the Whole Human Condition? Whitlam, Sexual Citizenship and the Royal Commission on Human Relationships (1974–77),” in Hocking, *Making Modern Australia*, 21–28.

¹³⁷ Evatt, Arnott, and Deveson, *Final Report*, 1:124.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

¹³⁹ Evatt, Arnott, and Deveson, *Final Report*, 4:125.

¹⁴⁰ Carol Johnson, Sarah Maddison, and Emma Partridge, “Australia: Parties, Federalism and Rights Agendas,” in *The Lesbian and Gay Movement and the State: Comparative Insights into a Transformed Relationship*, ed. Manon Tremblay, David Pattennotte, and Carol Johnson (London: Routledge, 2016), 27–28.

¹⁴¹ Adiva Sifris, “Gay and Lesbian Parenting: The Legislative Response,” in *Families, Policy and the Law: Selected Issues on Contemporary Issues for Australia*, ed. Alan Hayes and Daryl Higgins (Australian Institute of Family Studies, May 2014), 92.

homosexuality was “depraved or perverted.”¹⁴² The Anglican Diocese of Sydney, for example, urged the commission to resist any move to give homosexuality “the status of an accepted form of sexual activity.”¹⁴³ Yet in many respects this is precisely what the commissioners sought to do. One manifestation of this in the recommendations was to insist that homosexuals should no longer be defined solely by their “sexual activity”; instead, there should be an emphasis on their right to equality in many, but not all, areas. The commissioners concluded that they found no evidence that “sexual gratification is any more significant a part of homosexual relationships than of heterosexual relationships. On the other hand, we have received a great deal of evidence from homosexuals and non homosexuals that they have a genuine desire to change the legal and social consequences of being a homosexual in Australia.”¹⁴⁴ It is clear that the witness testimonies from gays and lesbians themselves that emphasized discrimination and exclusion had found more sympathetic ears at the commission. While many of the commission’s recommendations fell short of what CAMP’s submission had proposed, CAMP’s critique of the nuclear family resonated throughout the report, especially as it related to the safety and satisfaction of women and children in the heterosexual family unit. For example, the report was one of the first government inquiries into the incidence of domestic violence in Australia, making an important contribution toward “naming” such violence as a critical national problem.¹⁴⁵

CONCLUSION

By pointing out the discriminatory effects produced by heteronormative formations of citizenship and articulating their own citizenship identity in the language of private experience, gays and lesbians made claims to sexual citizenship in their submissions to the Royal Commission on Human Relationships in mid-1970s Australia. Gays’ and lesbians’ strategy of presenting themselves as citizens (and taxpayers) who were victims of discrimination acted to normalize homosexuality and to legitimize some of their claims on the state. By highlighting the ways that citizenship’s benefits were distributed unevenly based on sexuality, gay and lesbian activists at the commission challenged the heteronormative citizenship traditions that have long dominated Australian political life, opening up avenues for reform that have been pursued in subsequent decades. The activists’ self-presentation as citizens seeking liberal reform had worked to place homosexuality on the commission’s agenda. Just as feminists narrated stories of private experience

¹⁴² Evatt, Arnott, and Deveson, *Final Report*, 5:98.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 5:113.

¹⁴⁵ Suellen Murray and Anastasia Powell, *Domestic Violence: Australian Public Policy* (Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2011), 5–14.

to bolster their claims for rights and protections from a reforming Australian state in the 1970s, so too did gays and lesbians place their personal experiences on the commission's agenda to argue for recognition of their equal citizenship in the same decade. Staking a claim for sexual citizenship in this way was an important political strategy in the mid-1970s, when homosexual rights were still considered a matter of personal moral judgment for MPs rather than a matter of equality.¹⁴⁶ While gay activists might have presented a narrow range of homosexual identities in this unique public forum, the Royal Commission on Human Relationships represents a significant moment in the political mobilization of a homosexual identity in 1970s Australia. The homosexuals' strategy of presenting themselves as unequal citizens subject to "daily oppressions" because of their homosexuality worked to legitimize the homosexual sexual citizen and his or her claims on the state. While this may have reinforced the power of the state, it was nonetheless a power that would be wielded by progressive governments in favor of law reform throughout Australia in the coming decade, much of it made in the image of the royal commission's recommendations.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

MICHELLE ARROW is an associate professor of modern history at Macquarie University. Her most recent book is *Friday on Our Minds: Popular Culture in Australia since 1945* (2009), and she has published widely on histories of Australian culture, gender, and public and popular history. In 2014 Arrow, Catherine Freyne, and Timothy Nicastri won the NSW Premier's Multimedia History Prize for their radio feature *Public Intimacies: The 1974 Royal Commission on Human Relationships*. Arrow has held research fellowships at the National Archives of Australia and the National Library of Australia. She is currently a chief investigator (with Barbara Baird, Leigh Boucher, and Robert Reynolds) on the project "Gender and Sexual Politics: Changing Citizenship in Australia since 1969," funded by the Australian Research Council.

¹⁴⁶ Johnson, "From Morality to Equality," 1.