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Should a memorial to the Mardi Gras 78ers be erected on Oxford St?

 Yes

 No

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## EXCLUSIVE ACCESS FOR ANTI-GAY CULT

Category: [Entertainment](#), [News](#) Author: [Harley Dennett](#) Posted: Wednesday, 8 October 2008

A new book pieces together how the Exclusive Brethren sought to buy influence with the Liberal Party in its quest to stop the spread of "perverted" homosexuality and gay marriage.

No sin is more terrible in Brethren demonology than homosexuality, reporter Michael Bachelard discovered when interviewing ex-members for his book *Behind the Exclusive Brethren*. Gay members faced losing contact with their families forever if they came out.

One Albury man in the book left the Brethren and his family when he could no longer hide his homosexuality, and was lucky to keep regular supervised contact with his two young daughters.

However, when his wife became injured and was unable to care for their children, the Brethren still refused to let the gay man be with his children and instead placed them with a stranger who was later convicted of sexually abusing them.

"The father was still living in the same town, but they didn't even consider him," Bachelard said.

"Instead the man they gave his daughters to was already thought to be overly lustful of women. He's now living as a gay man and one of his girls lives with him, but the relationship was damaged."

Although there has been no change in their position on homosexuality, Bachelard said since Bruce Hales took over as worldwide leader in 2002 he has tried to improve the way the Exclusive Brethren deal with ex-members who want to maintain relationships with their families still in the cult.

"There's still a long way to go," Bachelard noted.

The Brethren also established separate schools and were given special permission to access distance education so they could keep sex and AIDS education out of the classroom, Bachelard discovered.

By the 2004 federal election, Hales decided to reverse a 175-year tradition and enter the political process, telling his flock "the current situation has never been more critical".

Labor leader Mark Latham's proposed private education shake-up could have severely cut their funding and independence, and recognition of same-sex unions was heating up as an issue.

The Brethren tried to keep quiet that they were spending hundreds of thousands in advertising against the Greens' "immoral policies", Bachelard said, and by the 2007 election they had access to Prime Minister John Howard and six lobbyist passes sponsored by Liberal MPs including Tony Abbott and Brendan Nelson.

Using documents obtained under freedom of information laws, Bachelard linked John Howard to efforts by the reclusive cult, whose members do not vote, to donate large sums of money to the Liberal Party without having it declared.

At the same time as some of the meetings were taking place, Howard also raised the threshold for political donations to \$10,000, indexed to \$10,500 by the time of the 2007 election.

"I would find the Liberal Party's denial of a relationship with Hales more convincing if, just 10 minutes after seeking [Liberal Party] comment, I didn't receive calls from Hales' spokesman wanting to know why I was asking these questions," Bachelard said.

"The Brethren was being considered political poison by that stage."

He also noted that its election material in 2007 carried the names of Brethren members, something it failed to do in 2004. However, the Brethren's official spokesman maintains that members involved in political campaigning are doing so privately and not as representatives of the group.

Just because they're unlikely to get too many audiences with the new federal Liberal leadership doesn't mean the Brethren is giving up lobbying. Bachelard suggested Sydney keep a close eye on whether the NSW Liberals will accept donations from the cult in the lead-up to the next state election.

"Their best ally is gone," Bachelard said. "They may also try to revive contact with Labor MPs on the Right."



Michael Bachelard pieces together the Brethren's hidden story

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The AIDS Trust of Australia presents the

Sydney Food & Wine Fair 2008

Saturday 1st November.  
Hyde Park North.  
Midday to 5pm

To pre-purchase your coupons to this year's event or volunteer visit [www.aidstrust.com.au](http://www.aidstrust.com.au)

### SURVEY

Relationship? Have you experienced conflict in a same-sex relationship? If you are over 18, currently in a same-sex relationship and would be willing to fill out this survey, please [click here](#). The survey will take about 30 minutes to complete and your responses will be completely anonymous.

[Macquarie University same-sex domestic violence survey](#)

### GAMMA

GAMMA, a support group for married men who have sex with men, meets in secure confidential and non-sexual surroundings at the ACON building, 9 Commonwealth St, Surry Hills, on the first and third Wednesdays of each month at 8pm. There is also a support line, Monday-Friday 6-10 pm, on 9267 4000.

[www.gamma.org.au](http://www.gamma.org.au)

### FOOD AND WINE FAIR

The AIDS Trust Sydney Food and Wine Fair will be held on Saturday 1 November in Hyde Park North and will this year feature the addition of a product market to highlight the quality of food and harvest. Go to [www.aidstrust.com.au](http://www.aidstrust.com.au) for more information or to buy coupons in advance.

[www.aidstrust.com.au](http://www.aidstrust.com.au)

### GAY BUSINESS

The Sydney Gay and Lesbian Business Association hosts Lemons With a Twist on the first Friday of each month and Fruits in Suits on the third Thursday of each month, at Slide.

[www.gaybusiness.com.au](http://www.gaybusiness.com.au)

### QUEERSCREEN

Lovers of gay cinema are encouraged to become a member of Queerscreen, Sydney's premier gay and lesbian film festival body.

[www.queerscreen.com.au](http://www.queerscreen.com.au)

## CURRENT ISSUE



### Driving force 78er dies

Lance Gowland, the truck driver at the first Mardi Gras and subsequent founder of the organisation, died on Monday aged 72 after a

**GOLDEN TICKET**  
*Quest*

DUKES OF WINDSOR  
**THE GRATES**  
**VAN SHE**

CHILDREN COLLIDE  
DUKES OF WINDSOR  
**ANDY BULL**

YVES KLEIN BLUE  
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**TICKET!**



info: Michael Bachelard will discuss the revelations in conversation with Craig Reucassel from The Chaser at Gleebooks in Glebe, Wednesday 15 October, 6.30pm. Bookings on 9660 2333.

Tags: [book](#), [Exclusive Brethren](#)



Article posted on Wednesday, 8 October 2008, filed under [Entertainment](#), [News](#). Follow responses to this article via the [RSS](#) feed.

#### One Comment on "Exclusive access for anti-gay cult"

Brendan of Wollongong NSW said,  
October 8th, 2008 @ 5:35 pm

No wonder the federals Liberals rejected attempts by The Greens for a Senate inquiry into the activities of the elusive Exclusive Brethren sect; and even rejected a recent attempt to table Bachelard's book in Parliament.

Given "just 10 minutes after seeking [Liberal Party] comment, [Bachelard received] calls from Hales' spokesman wanting to know why [Bachelard] was asking these questions", no wonder John Howard was all of a sudden "warning" MPs to have no contact with the elusive Exclusive Brethren sect last year. Wouldn't want any casual observer to get the right impression.

This is why our Freedom of Information laws must be robust and presume in favour of the real public interest, not the specious interests of ministers and MPs trying to shield their decisions and actions from public scrutiny.

It seems unlikely that we've seen or heard the last of the Exclusive Brethren sect's political activities.

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Name (required)

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