

PREAMBLE

(Preamble is not an operative part of constitution.)

In Australia's 60,000+ year history, 1978CE might have passed by as inconsequential. LGBTQI people in Australia know otherwise. Because we recognise 1978 as the birth-year of our first Mardi Gras. And while it was an arresting sight, it was arresting in other ways too. But you already know the Mardi Gras origin-story.

Defiance, expression, celebration, inclusion, protest, art, sex, love, and justice. Mardi Gras heralded the arrival of a people-led movement that wider Australia would not be allowed to ignore. Our time had come. We were visible. We would never again be unseen.

Through Mardi Gras we also saw ourselves. We saw our numbers, our diversity, our power, our beauty, our creativity, our potential, our humanity. We liked what we saw. We celebrated. We gained strength.

That strength underpinned our pursuit of social equity, fairness, and justice. It sustained us through the scourge of AIDS – we gathered and organised. Mardi Gras was central to Sydney's world-leading response to AIDS. We prevented new infections and saved lives. We cared for our sick and dying. We grieved together.

The unifying force of Mardi Gras ignited our cause for law reform. With each annual Mardi Gras, we became stronger, more confident, more organised, and more determined to assert ourselves in a society that was brutally and irrationally hostile to us.

Before Mardi Gras, we were criminals, incarcerated for our sexuality – we were subordinated to an age of consent higher than our straight compatriots - our relationships did not exist at law – our love was trivialised and dismissed - we were ruthlessly and lawfully discriminated against in employment, opportunities, and services. Mardi Gras provided the backdrop and impetus to the hard-fought advances in our human rights. We honour our champions of LGBTQI rights. We stand on the shoulders of giants.

Mardi Gras is about LGBTQI visibility, creativity, celebration, commemoration, and protest - on our terms, per our aesthetic, and in our expressive form. We ditch vitriol for tact. We make allies in the broader community. And we are determined to have a rollicking good time! From that first celebratory parade in 1978, Mardi Gras has produced events that have inspired, thrilled, irritated, empowered, informed, explained, and entertained. Reaching beyond its LGBTQI constituency, Mardi Gras appeals to the intellect, decency, and humanity of a wider audience. We win hearts and minds. Australia is a greater nation for embracing Mardi Gras.

Mardi Gras has evolved. It continues to meet the challenges of a changed and changing world. It remains the pre-eminent platform for LGBTQI visibility, creativity, celebration, commemoration, and protest. This Constitution marks a point in Mardi Gras' evolution.

By adopting this Constitution, the members of Mardi Gras commit to excellence in the ongoing governance of Mardi Gras. It establishes a framework for the responsible control and management of a Mardi Gras that is responsive to its members and to the LGBTQI communities that use the Mardi Gras platform.

A labour of love, this Constitution is the product of passionate debate, dialectic, and consensus. Conceived by Mardi Gras members, young and old, it enshrines the legacy of our past LGBTQI leaders; and it entrusts the future of Mardi Gras to our emerging LGBTQI leaders. By this Constitution, those leaders are enabled and empowered to shape and create a Mardi Gras of and for their times. May they always be fabulous times!