Legislative Council and the other was a medical practitioner.[29] Here already we have an indication of the players. A third group which tended to identify itself by profession was made up of church leaders. Reverend Peter Evans of the Taroona Baptist Church and President of the Baptist Union in Tasmania, was one of the first to be vocal on the issue. He criticised Wilson Tuckey for riding roughshod over community sensibilities and called for a compassionate approach.[30]

Within each of these groups (to which might be added regular contributors to Letters to the Editor), there were opposing views. In the church, for instance, variations between denominations are not surprising, but differences within denominations were also often quite profound. Added to inherent ethical disagreements, and arguments about the degree of control the state should have over the private moral behaviour of its citizens, was the ingrained geographical animosity between the north and the south of the state. Every letter published and every view expressed in the media represented only the surface of the turmoil of the debate within institutions, professions and the community.

2

SALAMANCA

Hobart's Salamanca Market began as a small craft outlet in the early 1970s. By 1988 it had become a bustling cultural focus for Hobartians, as well as a significant tourist attraction. The market was run during the summer months by the Hobart City Council who leased it to the Salamanca Arts Centre during winter. Most of its stallholders had seasonal permits, but casual permits were made available on the basis of first come first served. The success of the TGLRG's stall at the AIDS Conference, particularly in gaining support for the petition, inspired the group to brave the public. They decided that Salamanca was the place to have an ongoing stall, though the move was not made without some trepidation: 'We were all frightened that someone would see us that we knew. But we went anyway because we knew it was important ...'.[1]

Stallholders at Salamanca market represented diverse groups, including the Tasmanian Wilderness Society, the Bahais, Community Aid Abroad, the Australia East Timor Association, and Resistance, some of whom had been there for years. Individual members of TGLRG braved the early morning queue and organised a stall position on a regular casual basis from mid-August:

> For us it was absolutely revolutionary — all of us. Although we wouldn't have thought of it that way, the way it impacted on us, I'm sure it was, collectively and individually. To have a stall in Salamanca Market, it was just such a revolution! And obviously it was equally revolutionary for the powers-that-be, or they wouldn't have banned the thing.[2]

The public response to the stall encompassed a spectrum of opinions. Many signed the gay law reform petition sometimes against even the expectations of the TGLRG stallholders:

> You see people just kind of walk up and you think you're going to have an argument and they're actually there to sign it. I mean it really breaks through your stereotypes of who supports law reform.[3]

Other marketgoers treated the stall as a challenge:

> It seems that Christian Evangelists are drawn to the stall like moths to a lamp. Two came up to the stall and said, very quietly and calmly, that if we accepted Jesus, we would be liberated from our homosexuality. This caused me to clutch my pearls, briefly.[4]

There was, in those early weeks, no hint that this stall would be treated differently from any other at the market, but a month after the first stall, Robert Noga, under the direction of the Hobart City Council Parking and Finance Committee, rang the TGLRG to say the group's stall at Salamanca Market was inadmissible under his committee's authority. He said it was offensive and political and if it appeared again the stallholders would be arrested.[5]

If the objection to the stall on political grounds was surprising, given the nature of some of the other stalls at the market, the objection on the grounds of offensiveness was even more so. The stall, as mentioned before, contained petitions. It also carried logos that consisted of a pink triangle and a blue map of Tasmania, and a poster with two passport-type photographs, each with the head of a young man, his identity obscured by a black band across his eyes. The caption read: 'Steve slept with Mark on the night of his 21st. In Tasmania he could be in gaol until he's 42.' Another stall which the Hobart City Council appeared not to find offensive displayed T-shirts depicting drug use; people vomiting, defecating, farting; graphic illustrations of penises, breasts, buttocks; and even bestiality — Wile E. Coyote copulating with the Road Runner.[6]

The Council's Town Clerk, Barrie Southorn, said the decision to ban the stall was because the market was for selling goods, not promoting illegal acts. 'No one else has stalls saying legalise theft, prostitution or decriminalise heroin', he said. 'If the market becomes a place for activists exposing their views it could become a place where families cease to go.'[7]

The TGLRG was placed in the position where it had to accept discrimination or place its members at risk of police arrest.

> We had a meeting and everyone was really scared; no one knew what to do. One of the people who ... enabled us to build up our confidence — as he so often did, in so many of these situations — was Mark.[8] He didn't sort of just bowl in and say, 'Okay, we've got to all get arrested!'; he just was very good at clarifying what people felt and directing their indignation and anger towards a constructive goal, and building up our confidence so that, in achieving that goal, we didn't feel daunted or disempowered.[9]

The group was in no doubt that action needed to be taken, but most, although prepared to take on copious responsibilities behind the scenes, were not prepared to go into the firing line. As one man put it, it was:

> ... partly because of stuff to do with work and visibility, because you couldn't avoid the visibility if you were arrested, but also because I had a horrendous fear of the police and being arrested, and that system.[10]

One man, Chris O'Loughlin, offered to staff the stall if it came to a confrontation with the police.

> He was so brave — *so* brave — to volunteer to do that and none of us knew what was going to happen and no one else was willing to volunteer because it was so daunting that we might get arrested.[11]

As it happened the police did not make any arrests for another four weeks. During the winter months the market was leased to the Salamanca Arts Centre Foundation. At the end of September, on the last Saturday before the running of the market was handed back to the Hobart City Council, the council directed the Arts Centre administrator, Lenore Tardiff, to prohibit the TGLRG stall. She presented the stallholders with a written request to leave, but made it clear that this was not at her instigation:

> My organisation didn't raise this. We received a directive from the City Council to prohibit the group from promoting its cause at Salamanca Market. We have asked the group to leave.[12]

When Mark Davison, spokesperson for the TGLRG, said the group would defy the ban, Ms Tardiff indicated that she would make no move to stop them; and then she herself signed the gay law reform petition.

The timing of the ban, and the Council's reaction to what some aldermen referred to as the Foundation's poor handling of it, indicates another agenda. Ongoing complaints from Hobart's Central Business District that the market was luring away its customers had brought questions about the running of the market to Council and prompted the proposal that it could take place on a Sunday. In addition, Salamanca's growing popularity and profitability made the Council increasingly interested in taking over the running of the winter season. As Lenore Tardiff pointed out:

> I understand that there are those in Council who are using this to further erode our position and they are also trying to use this gay reform business against us.[13]

The perception that discrimination against gay men and lesbians is not only justifiable but also likely to receive popular support has repeatedly been used as a weapon to achieve other agendas. Before 1988 this tended to be by way of smear campaigns against individuals, such as the targeting of Bob Brown during successive election campaigns, but from Salamanca onwards the gay community as a group was used to the same end. The following year a political agenda was at the root of much anti-homosexual action during the election campaign; but at Salamanca it was a strategy that misfired. Both the media and a significant section of the population recognised that the Hobart City Council's autocratic ruling created a precedent that might easily be applied to other groups.

The ban attracted considerable outrage from civil libertarians. The *Mercury*'s editorial 'Market Ban is Wrong' called it 'little more than an ill-advised attempt at political censorship'.[14] In a letter to the editor, a writer agreed:

> When society embarks on selective censorship of a minority group which is exercising its democratic right to peacefully reform a law, it is using methods we deem unacceptable when they occur in other countries such as South Africa or the infamous Third Reich.[15]

In an article headlined 'MP Blasts Council Over Gay Stall Ban', John White, Chairman of the Council for Civil Liberties and Shadow Attorney-General, emphasised that the principle of freedom of speech

was at stake, and if now it was the crushing of people speaking out for gay law reform, it might next be those promoting Christianity or supporting the Wilderness Society.[16]

On the first day of the Hobart City Council's summer market the TGLRG set up its stall at 11 a.m. 'amid patter from spruikers and heckles from a Christian evangelist'.[17] Supporters with placards provided a backdrop. Within fifteen minutes the Deputy Town Clerk approached a TGLRG spokesperson who reported:

> He said he would allow us to have our fun this week but that he was giving us notice that next week they would take whatever steps necessary to stop us presenting our cause.[18]

Although by the third Saturday of the ban there was a police presence, it was not until 22 October that they took any action. The following day the *Sunday Tasmanian* proclaimed: 'Arrests as Council Snuffs Out Gay Protest'. Nine people were charged with trespass when they failed to leave the market after the Acting Town Clerk (this time Brent Armstrong) had read them section 228a of the Hobart Corporation Act.

The protest was less 'snuffed' than inflamed. The following Saturday there were thirteen arrests, and on the next a further twenty-seven. By December, 130 arrests had been made.

The TGLRG organised mid-weekly Salamanca strategy sessions in addition to their regular fortnightly law reform meetings. For some this meant both a hectic and a Jekyll-and-Hyde existence.

> The schedule for the week, outside work hours, was that every Wednesday night there was a meeting that made all the decisions about what would happen at the next Saturday. And then Saturday... would start at five in the morning, to get down there and be all prepared, and would go all morning, and then sort of recovering on Saturday afternoon and Sunday ... doing media and writing things up and writing letters. And then during the week at night it would all be trying to organise things and ring people and everything. And then I'd go in at nine o'clock in the morning to the Hydro, in my little computer programming job with a little screen, into this sort of quiet, dead, homophobic, sexist, racist ... environment ... and be a very quiet, mild little computer programmer.[19]

Jacki Russell-Green, the group's first lesbian media spokesperson, remembered the group as being almost exclusively male when she became involved, and that the subsequent inclusion of lesbians who were also feminists brought to the group experience gained from years

of agitating for women's rights; experience that included the philosophy of working collectively, the skills of working strategically and politically, as well as the expectation of having to put themselves on the line to achieve any headway from a largely unsympathetic system.[20]

Some lesbians did not attend because they felt it was unrelated to them. They had spent much of their political lives fighting for basic rights for women and it seemed an anathema for them to protest for what appeared to be a men's issue. They believed that women were always doing the work for men and subsuming their own needs. This position had its roots early in the century when the suffragette movement was undermined by pressure to withdraw their demands for votes and focus on perceived national interests during the First World War, and also in the socialist movement when women were asked not to pursue their own needs lest it weaken the class struggle. More recently, sexism in the gay liberation movement had motivated lesbians at the 1975 Homosexual Conference in Melbourne to form a separatist movement.

Anne Collins, while she shared this political past, felt very strongly that she needed to take part in the protest because basic human rights were at stake. She was concerned about the position some lesbians were taking:

> This attitude disturbs me as much as anyone who thinks it's not important because it's a gay issue. It's a dangerous attitude and doesn't recognise the basic attack on democratic rights. I would rather people said they weren't going because they were mowing the lawn or going away for the weekend than because it was a boys' issue.[21]

Salamanca was, for the TGLRG, a learning place for direct action and it informed the group's subsequent *modus operandi*. Not only was there the experience of feminist activism, but also much of the strategic planning of actions came from people — heterosexual, lesbian and gay — who had been involved in green politics.

As the weeks went on it became increasingly clear that although the stall's primary aim had been to gain support for the repeal of laws relating to male homosexual acts, the reaction to it affected the whole gay and lesbian community, and there was a sense of outrage and disbelief thoughout the community that such an overt assault was being made on their basic civil rights.

> I'd grown up in this society that had promised me that it would treat me in a certain way — and maybe that treatment was, in itself, a bit unfairly privileged because it was based on my gender and my class

> and my skin colour — but I'd nonetheless come to expect a certain way of being treated. And all of a sudden all of that evaporated and there was none of it there.[22]

During the initial weeks, as word got around, the number of lesbians and gay men who joined the protest grew. Some drove down from the north of the state to take part in the protest. Only very few had been public about their sexuality, and taking part in the protest not only meant being seen by market goers, there was also the probability that their presence would be broadcast on national television.

> My impression is ... very strongly that there were ... gays and lesbians there: people who hadn't been out on the streets ever before, and people for whom it was a big coming-out and probably haven't been involved in much else ... I could point to a heap of men and some women who were there, clapping their hands and singing and stuff, who you would think, 'Oh God, really? *They* were there?' But they were, yeah. Almost in spite of themselves they were there.[23]

After the decision to be there came the question of whether to risk arrest. Some stood and protested behind what could only be described as barricades, but more and more they came forward and risked arrest.

> There were the people ... who got arrested ... went one step further, almost despite themselves. Well, often they didn't go down there with that intention at all and they were in the back of a police van. I know some young people who were in that position ... they weren't even out to their parents and they were in the back of a police van.[24]

The ban was an such an imposition of values and an invasion of the very core of what it was to be a gay man or lesbian, that along with the mixture of rage and indignation, a sense of community and need for solidarity became so compelling that previous commitments shrank into insignificance.

> I think the first week of the arrests I was on an AIDS Council stall. And the second week I was on an AIDS Council stall and could see all this happening and I just thought, 'There's no way I can stay here,' so I just packed up and then went up and got arrested.[25]

There were also those whose conscious decision not to take part was perhaps even harder:

> Look, that's the toughest time I've ever had ... You asked me before about the ... the conflict of interest or whatever between being a health person employed by a bureaucracy and being involved in a

community base. Because I wanted to go and say that, 'Well, this ought to change,' as a private citizen; but because I held a position that involved a client group, then there was no way in the world I could've gone and done that. For me, personally, if I could've gone down there with a wig on or something, I would've. But I couldn't go as me, Gregory Stephens, public servant — I couldn't have done that because it was too big a conflict between what that issue was and what my job was. And I had great agony over it. [26]

Bob Brown was another who made a conscious decision not to become involved in the arrests although he did visit the stall. His concern was with his already high media profile:

My judgement on that was that if I put one foot into this debate the media will forever want to refer to me, and there were terrific spokespeople emerging ... because I remember feeling really the difficulty of deciding whether to become another person who got arrested to add to the strength of the protest. But it was going so well and so strongly, I think, in retrospect, I made the right decision there.[27]

A number of heterosexuals supporting the protest found they had a higher profile than intended. One school teacher not only found herself being threatened with arrest by a man she had gone out with, but was also on the evening news:

And she was on TV and her headmaster called her in and gave her the big telling-off — you know, that her job was threatened and stuff because she was involved in this.[28]

As the number of protesters increased so did the officiousness with which they were dealt:

And it seemed to escalate. Like in subsequent weeks it was not just if you stood near the stall ... people could be arrested for signing a petition — which is pretty appalling when you think about it. Also you could be arrested if you looked like you were part of it. I don't know what kind of a yardstick they used to work out whether you were part of it or not. And then at other times there would be a kind of no-go area.[29]

The Council issued directives that those who staffed the stall were to be banned for life from even attending the market. People who displayed the words 'gay' or 'lesbian' or a pink triangle could be charged and arrested, as could any 'known homosexual' who was anywhere in

the market. One official declared with a degree of pride that the Council had photographs and videotapes 'of many of the people who are there week in, week out, and they are the ones we have banned or will consider banning'.[30] Hobart's Lord Mayor, Alderman Doone Kennedy, made her position clear when she said: 'It is right for there to be one law for heterosexuals and one law for homosexuals'.[31]

Not only was there none of the rights or none of the respect that we expect to be accorded to people at the end of the twentieth century, or even in the modern period: all of a sudden we were back before Magna Carta; we didn't even have the right to petition. People would have petitions in their hands and be saying, 'Come and sign the petition,' and the police would take the petition out of their hands and just rip it up ...

I had all these deeply ingrained expectations about a liberal democratic society. And one of them was that if a piece of paper says, 'To the Speaker of the House of Assembly and Members of the House of Assembly, in Parliament assembled', and with signatures on it, then a policeman comes and rips it up without something happening ... ! But nothing happened. You don't get thrown in gaol because you've got a stall in a public market with petitions on it. You don't have public figures — like local government figures — saying, 'Oh yes, I endorse these people being arrested because I don't agree with what they think and say.'[32]

People who came to protest included those who had suffered years of exploitation and terror under oppressive regimes, they themselves narrowly escaping death, though many of their loved ones had not. They had come to Tasmania to begin a new life in a place where principles of free speech and tolerance of difference appeared to be upheld. For them, seeing particular groups whose identity and beliefs differed from the mainstream being silenced by the authorities and their rights removed was particularly painful. They were only too aware of where such intolerance had led in the past.

One of the supporters in the crowd was an elderly man who had lived in Europe during the war years. He reminded us to learn from history and spoke out against the dangers of letting the Council do this — because there were other people in the crowd saying things like 'Oh send them to Macquarie Island' — and he was standing up and saying — he was really angry, he was quite an elderly man, agitated. He was saying 'Look, I have seen the concentration camps', and his wife was trying to say 'Calm down: Calm down'.[33]

Other people received jolts from the past at an even more personal level:

> I heard this woman — again in the crowd — talking about [her treatment by] the police. She said: 'They asked me my nationality and I did not say anything, so they looked at my surname' (so they must have had some ID of hers), 'Jew. So she's a Jewess'. And then [they] poured out a heap of anti-Semitism. And I was listening to this. You can't quite believe this. You know the theory about the link between racism and homophobia, but to see it in your own backyard. This isn't even Europe, this is Hobart.[34]

As Rodney Croome put it:

> The interesting thing is that this is exposed, that the fragility of our democracy is exposed, when it comes to gay and lesbian issues. We're the weak link in the chain, if you like. Who was it who said that the chain's only as strong as its weakest link? Well, some people would dismiss that superficially and say, 'Well, that would never happen to other people. It only happens to you because you're weak politically, but that would never happen [to anyone else].' But the fact that it can happen to us means that it can happen to anyone.[35]

By 5 November, the eighth week since the imposition of the ban, emotions were running high. The *Sunday Tasmanian* of 6 November encapsulated its interpretation of the events in its headline 'Market Chaos as 27 Nabbed'.

While most of the other market stallholders carried on with their business, a couple carried TGLRG petitions (and were arrested for doing so); but to those whose stalls were nearby, other stallholders would pass remarks like: 'Oh, you've got the kiss of death next to you'.[36] One man who sold secondhand wares from a nearby stall became so frustrated that Saturday, that, as Anne Collins said:

> He just got really angry, because as the crowds got bigger they were really disrupting trade around that area ... He was so angry this one day that as well as yelling abuse at us he started picking up his own wares and smashing them to the ground. 'I come all the way from Launceston and I've got to earn a living.'[37]

There was, that week, what the papers referred to as a '60-strong protest mob'. Police reaction on this occasion made it clear that they saw the demonstration as being primarily about gay law reform although there were still many supporters present who were concerned with civil rights more generally.

The 27 detainees were escorted by police — wearing rubber gloves — from the paddy wagon to the station. Kath McLean remembered: '... there were jokes about AIDS — the police were making jokes about AIDS and wearing rubber gloves. Just cracks. They all had them on'.[38]

One woman being frisked by a policewoman was told:

> 'Don't worry, I don't enjoy this.' As if all gay rights supporters were homosexuals. As if all lesbians would love to be frisked by cops with rubber gloves on. As if women caught AIDS from each other by touching. As if AIDS permeated through women's clothing ... And the assumption of sexual desire in the act of being arrested and detained is insulting ...[39]

A police spokesperson, when asked by the press, was unable to confirm whether police had worn gloves — 'but he said rubber gloves were kept in the change room and usually were used for drunks who had vomited on themselves'.[40]

Those people being arrested for the second time were put into cells:

> The worst thing ... was that they then took all my property away from me ... you know, ring, watch, bracelet, money, glasses, shoelaces. And I pleaded with the man not to take my glasses, because I'm absolutely blind as a bloody bat. And he had specs on too, so I appealed to him as a fellow spectacle wearer, and he just sort of looked at me like ... like I didn't have a head. Then they locked us up in the cells upstairs. The cell was just ... it had a toilet in it without a toilet seat, and there was a bed built into the wall that had a mattress on it covered with rubber with dried vomit on the corner. And I couldn't see it very well because I didn't have my glasses. It was pretty horrible. It was pretty alienating because you didn't know how long you were going to be there, and it was pretty frightening. Here I was, a thirty-something-year-old woman, middle class, and I knew I was likely to be getting out before the end of the day. But I imagined what it would be like if I was more powerless. You know, it's pretty horrible.[41]

In the magistrate's court that afternoon the police were unsuccessful in obtaining conditions of bail that would prevent those held in custody from returning to Salamanca Place, and they sought other means to stifle further protest. The Assistant Commissioner, Keith Viney, called Rodney Croome and David Brewer to his office and told them that the police had the power to arrest them for attempting to breach the peace if they left their houses on Saturday mornings.[42]

The high media profile of the Salamanca arrests began to spread to places as far away as Moscow and Washington. In Sydney the *Sydney Morning Herald* of 17 October 1988 reported that the Tasmanian Premier, Robin Gray, visiting the city to promote tourism in Tasmania, had said that everyone in Sydney was welcome to come to Tasmania to live — greenies, the sick, Aborigines — but, he said, 'homosexuals we're not interested in'. On subsequent Saturdays a coalition of gay and lesbian supportive groups organised demonstrations outside the Tasmanian Travel Bureau in Sydney to 'show solidarity with Tassie gays'.[43]

On the Saturday of Week 10, the *Mercury* of 19 November reported that the Hobart City Council had offered a compromise. The group could keep its stall if it didn't 'advertise its cause or actively solicit signatures'. This meant no posters identifying the stall or containing the words 'gay' or 'lesbian', and the banning even of handouts explaining the petition.[44] The TGLRG considered this to be continued discrimination and refused to alter the content of the stall. The *Sunday Tasmanian* of 20 November proclaimed: 'Gays Break Fragile Truce'. At this point the TGLRG lodged a complaint against the Hobart City Council with the Federal Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission. They responded that they could only bring moral pressure to bear but had no legal powers.[45]

The following week 34 arrests were made.

At a meeting of the Hobart City Council on 28 November, one of the three aldermen who opposed the ban put forward a motion that the ban be lifted. The response was reported as being rowdy, and was, without doubt, negative. Alderman Darlene Haigh asked of the councillor who put the motion what she was supposed to say to her 10-year-old daughter when she was asked what it was all about. 'I am sick and tired', she said, 'of listening to this sort of thing.'[46]

The Lord Mayor, Doone Kennedy, was sure the Council had made the right decision when it rejected the motion 9 to 3: 'I am quite certain the council has acted responsibly and that it has the support of the great majority of the people of Hobart', she said.[47]

The Council went on to invest three of its officers with the power to ban anyone they wanted from the market. Two of the first people on whom they chose to impose this extension of the ban were a photographer and a *Mercury* journalist. It was a move that prompted an editorial supporting law reform and condemning the Council's action. The following week SBS Television made a documentary which broadcast nationally the arrest of 29 people.

The ban was finally lifted on the eve of Human Rights Day, 10 December, which celebrated the 40th Anniversary of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights. The Human Rights Commission had extended an invitation to the TGLRG to participate in its ceremony at Salamanca Place. The Lord Mayor was one of three councillors still adamant that the ban should stay in place.

A week later charges were dropped.[48] The Hobart City Council had failed to gazette the market area and so held no authority to prosecute for trespass. Local police were furious at the Council's oversight, which for them made the whole episode a pointless waste of time and money.[49]

During the ban membership of the TGLRG had grown from 34 to over 200. As one member observed: 'The ban did wonders for the gay and lesbian community, in terms of bringing us together ... and out.'[50]

While gay men and lesbians were committing a lot of time and effort to political action, the growing sense of community was so empowering that an ambitious social and fund-raising event was organised during the height of the Salamanca conflict.

> The TGLRG Cabaret Benefit Night was a resounding success. It incorporated song and dance, poetry, comedy and drama, satire, sentimentality and moments of pure camp. It drew on the artistic and technical skills of some 40 people who whipped up an intoxicating cocktail which left the audience of predominantly gay men and lesbians both shaken and stirred.
>
> Through both intervals, and after the show, the Backspace Theatre was abuzz with talk of gay pride, with the laughter (rarely heard) of gay men and lesbians sharing jokes (!), with the expressions of anger at the HCC [Hobart City Council] and of joyous confidence for the future political, cultural and social maturing of Tasmania's homosexual community. People that night used the word 'community' a lot.[51]

As an acknowledgment of lesbian involvement, and in recognition of the TGLRG's broadening focus, the group advised that the name had been changed to the Tasmanian Gay and Lesbian Rights Group.

The Lord Mayor continued to be haunted by the spectre of the group. As the representative of the citizens of Hobart she wrote the *Mercury* a Christmas letter:

> The Minister for Tourism and I travelled to the summit of Mount Wellington to open the observation deck. The day was perfect; the view was perfect; the only visual pollution was a protester posing as

Father Christmas carrying a placard embellished with what appeared to be the logo of the Homosexual Law Reform Group. The mind boggles when one wonders what gifts that bag could be carrying. Perhaps I was mistaken. It may have been the Christmas Fairy![52]

There is no doubt that Salamanca played a substantial role both in the gay law reform debate and the development of an identifiable and politicised gay and lesbian community in Tasmania. It brought the issue of law reform into the open in a spectacularly public way, testing the waters of community opinion on homosexuality and human rights. It placed gay law reform as a human rights issue and indicated both the fragility of democracy when put to the test and the determination with which it would be defended.

3

'THEY SHOULD HANG THEIR HEADS IN SHAME': STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT BACKLASH

While the Battle of Salamanca was raging, the State Minister for Local Government, Ian Braid, stressed that neither he nor the Government could be held responsible for the bans and that it was purely a Hobart City Council matter.[1] Certainly the State Government appears to have tacitly approved of the Council's action and, by the end of September 1988, had itself imposed bans on the use of government property for gay community groups.[2]

While the government was trying to distance itself from Salamanca, it was not in any way keeping silent on the issue of homosexuality. The proposal laid bare at the National AIDS Conference — that gay law reform was essential to an effective AIDS prevention strategy — not so much raised a debate as created a polarisation. On the one side, predominantly Labor MPs were supporting the proposition on either civil rights or health grounds, and on the other, predominantly Liberal MPs were opposing the proposition on either a moral or health basis.

The matter was propelled into the government arena on 23 August 1988 when Judy Jackson MHA (Labor), presented the first TGLRG petition calling for gay law reform. The petition was tabled, although four Liberal Members voted against receiving it.[3] While this