

[Julie McCrossin - 78er to TV Narrator](#)

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The Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras has become one of the biggest and longest running parades of its kind in the world. While we might be tempted to take our gay pride events and our basic freedoms for granted, Julie McCrossin was one of the original participants in the 1978 demonstration that later became Mardi Gras, and has seen the event evolve.



‘This isn’t the same Mardi Gras as in 1978, this is a new beast. In 1978 it was predominantly about fighting for legal reform,’ Ms McCrossin told OUTinPerth.

‘We wanted it [homosexuality] to be decriminalised and we wanted to be accepted by our families. To not lose our jobs, to have some services, particularly for young people if they were thrown out of their home because their parents found it unacceptable, we needed housing, we needed counsellors, we needed legal services and of course, the great trauma of HIV/AIDS meant an explosion around sexual health and the

needs of sexual health services.

‘I think we’ve moved more now to a kind of international human rights focus, and the reason for that is because we’ve been remarkably successful in bringing reform and legal liberation in our own country.’

Now in its 31st year, the annual Sydney festival and parade has been renamed New Mardi Gras. An idea Ms McCrossin finds appropriate.

‘Every week in some home, somewhere in Australia, a young person is telling their parents for the first time that they think they might be gay or lesbian and every week a family is facing this for the first time.

‘For me the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras and indeed all the activities in the different capital cities around the country are always a great message to families and to those individuals that there are a lot of people who think this is a normal part of human life... And that’s always a very important new message for someone.’

According to McCrossin, this year’s theme, Nations United not only reflects the thousands of overseas visitors who flock to Sydney for the parade but Australia’s own multicultural society.

‘I was thrilled with Nations United as the theme because my experience is that every year in the Mardi Gras a new group come out from a particular country or a particular faith group or even a new part of government services.

‘There are some cultural communities where it (homosexuality) is absolutely unacceptable and people are at risk of physical violence even from family members and so I think Mardi Gras still has an important role to play in terms of support and advocacy in our multicultural society.’

Julie McCrossin will be co-hosting Foxtel’s live coverage of the 2009 Mardi Gras parade with Pam Ann.

Amy Henderson and Zoe Carter

<http://www.outinperth.com/index.php/life/people/julie-mccrossin-78er-to-tv-narrator>