

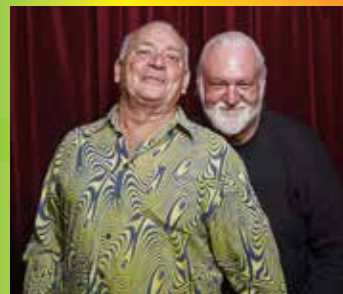


GRAI 
GLBTI Rights in Ageing Inc.

Our Voices MADE CONNECTIONS

FROM FEATHERS AND FIGHTS
TO FRIENDSHIP AND FREEDOM

— 50 FABULOUS YEARS —



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

We are blessed to live on Whadjuk Noongar Country. We acknowledge that Noongar people remain the custodians of their Country, and that they continue to practice their values, languages, beliefs and knowledge. We pay our respects to the elders and knowledge holders of the Country on which we live, work, love and travel.

We would like to honour and recognise the past and ongoing work of the members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, intersex, queer and asexual (LGBTIQA+) community, and include anyone else who is diverse in sex, gender, or sexual orientation within this acronym. We would like to thank LGBTIQA+ people for their contributions to our society; particularly in areas of health and equality, and acknowledge their experiences of prejudice and discrimination and celebrate their strength, resilience, and perseverance.

The photos on the front cover are the work of members of Shutterpups: Gregory Hellenen, Peter King, and Mineth Liyanage.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

After the success of the first *Our Voices We Have Changed the World* publication in 2024, the Board of GRAI committed to producing an edition each year. The aim of the *Our Voices* series is simple but important: to record the stories of our LGBTI community while celebrating the diversity and resilience that has carried us forward.

The 2025 edition aligns with 2 extraordinary milestones within Western Australia's LGBTI community. While Connections Nightclub celebrated 50 years as one of Australia's most iconic queer venues, GRAI also marked 20 years of advocacy, visibility and connection for older LGBTI people. Together these anniversaries represent 5 decades of resilience, community, pride and belonging.

Before there was GRAI, there was Connections. This edition honours that safe space. The stories shared here remind us where we found our chosen family, met lifelong friends, and danced or flirted our way into becoming who we are.

The stories captured here barely scratch the surface (of the stained carpet flooring) of all that has happened at Connections. My hope is that they spark your own memories of this remarkable place and perhaps encourage you to share those stories too.

I am also proud to say that this edition has been self-funded by GRAI, supported by donations from generous members of our community. I am proud to lead a board that is deeply committed to capturing and preserving the history of our LGBTI community.



Firstly, let me acknowledge Tim Brown and all the staff at Connections. Thank you – not only for what you have done for our community over the years, but also for sharing your stories and photographs for this edition. Your efforts have ensured that a place has existed for our community, young and old. Through every chapter of our history, from the AIDS epidemic to the COVID pandemic, Connections has remained a constant because of your dedication and hard work.

To everyone who generously shared their memories and stories, thank you. Your contributions allow us not only to reminisce, but also to preserve these histories. The stories in this edition will be provided to the State Library of Western Australia so that future generations can understand and appreciate the journeys that brought us here. To our editor, Tarmon Gibson, we again offer our sincere thanks. Your passion for the craft of storytelling helps bring these memories to life and ensures each voice is heard with care and respect.

GRAI is proud to preserve the voices of our older LGBTI Community, whose legacy will be carried forward by future generations. The stories in this book are snapshots of moments that shaped our community. Nights on the dance floor, friendships formed in quiet corners, laughter that echoed long after the music stopped. Together they form a living record of who we were, how we found each other, and how our connections shape who we are and who we will become.

These are their stories. I hope you enjoy them.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David".

David Gibson
Chair, GRAI

March 2026

FOREWORD

I never had a grand plan to run a nightclub. Certainly never imagined I'd do it for most of my adult life. And if you'd have told me that one day I would be asked to write the preface to a book of stories about Connections Nightclub, I'd have laughed at you. Not because I couldn't imagine it happening, but because I couldn't imagine such a book being published without the storytellers getting sued and/or arrested!

But we can, and we have. Shared places and shared stories are two of the very things that define a community, help make it strong. And we have both.

Since 1975, Connections has witnessed 50 remarkable years in the history of our people; years both wonderful and tumultuous, reflecting incredible change, adversity and resilience in our community. And, by virtue of its location in a small, isolated city, it has been a hub for all of our community, all the colours of our rainbow family – and then some! This makes it even more special and precious.

Connections has been a mirror to change, and part of its legacy, I hope, is the active role it has played in achieving that change.

It is, in the end, just a disco, a place of laughter and forgetting, of ephemeral joy ... But it is also a place of incredible memories; memories fuelled by the gamut of emotions. Connections has witnessed all the big themes of life: love, friendship, sex, death and passion. It has awakened and nurtured feelings of freedom, belonging and release. All under the sparkle of mirror balls ...



Tim Brown
Current co-owner of Connections Nightclub

February 2026



ADAM COOPER

(he/him)

Connection's Nightclub has a very special place in my heart, and – given that I was born in 1976 – has pretty much been there all my life. We've grown together, through good times and bad. There was a period between 1994 and 1997 (guesstimating here as the exact details are a bit hazy!) where we would go out 6 days a week, only resting on Monday (mainly due to the fact that most places were shut that night).

... men would stand and watch the dancers shake their rumps ...

I remember Connections once being a bit smaller, a bit simpler (for lack of a better word), and even a bit darker – not that this made it any less fab! My favourite night of the week was Wednesday, which was a male only night called 'Reach'. Back then, the layout of the club was basically a dance floor and a wall of glass or clear Perspex to the side where men would stand and watch the dancers shake their rumps. I recall being both the voyeur and the exhibitionist on several occasions.



Another anecdote I just must share ... One night at Connie's, I dragged my Mum and Sister-in-law upstairs and a lovely lady came up to them and proceeded to tell them what a cute couple they made. It really was quite funny, and I always try and bring it up at family get-togethers.

On that happy high note, I'd like to wish Connie's a very happy 50th – and here's to many more!!!

ALAN MULLER

(he/him)

In 1978 I was a young emerging Perth artist who had not yet come out. Connections had the reputation of being a den of iniquity, so going there was seen as a daring thing to do. One Thursday night, a friend talked me into going and I met my first male partner. With my new boyfriend as a model, I began painting artworks that expressed my coming out and the tidal wave of changes in my life.



Making Up by Alan Muller
Acrylic on canvas, 1985
Collection of the Art Gallery of Western Australia
Reproduced with permission from the artist.

A friend saw my paintings and encouraged me to try and show them to a gay audience. He suggested I speak to Colin Griffiths, who was the manager of Connections. My first gay themed painting, Tamas, was exhibited in 1979 at Connections on the wall above the stairs and illuminated by a spotlight to dramatic effect. Over the following year, 4 other works were exhibited.

At the beginning of 1981 I found more inspiration at Connections. New young people in strong make up and new styles of clothes heralded the New Romantic and New Wave movements. Performers at Connections like Natasha and Audrey were a very long way from the feathers-and-flounce look of old drag miming Broadway songs. Songs they chose were contemporary and edgy. The popular culture influence from London's Blitz Club and Japanese Kabuki gave a whole new look to drag, make up and clothes that were boldly experimental and theatrical. I finally got the courage to ask some of the Connections performers to model for me. Audrey, Natasha, Pricilla Perfect and Sweet Jane all posed for photographs from which I created paintings that became a central part of my exhibitions at Gallery 52 in Claremont in 1981 and 1983.

Perth was not a big place, and Connies was like a big mixed bag of lollies with the unexpected lurking in corners. The very loud music was fantastic, with lots of thumping disco tracks, but at times the DJ would throw a curveball and suddenly play something like 'Highway to Hell' by ACDC. So many people smoked cigarettes, that, through the night, the cigarette smoke slowly became a thick fog.

Connections had the reputation of being a den of iniquity, so going there was seen as a daring thing to do.



In 1982, I was shocked to see a work colleague at Connections. With his 'bush bogan' look of denim and very long hair, he swaggered over to me and said he had come to Connections to 'have a look'. The following day at work he said that he was disappointed by Connections because, even when he went to the toilet, no-one had attempted to 'molest him'. My colleague discovered that the Connections crowd were actually very cool and friendly people.

With a mix of ages and people from all walks of life from across the city, the Club brought everyone together to have a great night. It was a community of some truly inspiring people.

Connections – Happy 50th!



ANDREW DOUGLAS

(he/him)

I first went to Connies in January 1978 with three straight friends. It was the first time for all of us. I was thrilled as I'd never been to such a venue owned by, and specifically for, gays and others who didn't fit the then 'neat' sexual categories.

I was thrilled as I'd never been to such a venue owned by, and specifically for, gays and others who didn't fit the 'neat' sexual categories.

Initially I was a little intimidated by the novelty but soon embraced the experience. It helped that I was with other supportive friends: a woman I'd known since primary school and her two housemates, who were a heterosexual couple. Never will I forget that first time!

As it was a more closeted era, don't think photos were encouraged at the time. However, I still have the original top I wore that night: a simple sheer pale blue hippie-type thing with embroidered flowers on the shoulders front and back. What's more – my Mama had bought it for me for \$5 in 1978!



CARL FREEDMAN

I had just moved to Perth ... heard about a nightclub about to open. An advert in the Sunday paper in the personal columns. What to wear, how does the hair look, how do you get in. Arrived early, walked past a few times then walked in, up a long steep staircase into a blaze of lights, music and people. Trying to look casual, in 6-inch platform shoes, tight-as jeans ... open neck shirt and an afro.

You felt comfortable to be with your people, safe to express, be camp, flirt, and just let go.

The bar was so high, even in platforms the bar staff looked down at you and smiled. I remember seeing a person I had met at Swanbourne Beach, nerves at saying 'Hello'. The drinks kicked in, the music was full disco, the dancefloor beckoned. You felt comfortable to be with your people, safe to express, be camp, flirt, and just let go.



The people you met became your tribe, a connection. They were like you, trying to just see where they fit in.

Leaving late at night was sometimes stressful, as some people in the straight community took it upon themselves to hassle and bash ('poofers') as they left – so you never left alone. The people you met became your tribe, a *connection*. They were like you, trying to just see where they fit in.

I went on to work in gay establishments through people I met – the sauna, Feathers restaurant and Trish's Wine Bar. Many people are no longer with us, but through Connections, GAY PERTH had opened its wings.





COLIN LONGWORTH

(he/him)

Connections: The First Time

I remember my first visit to the club. Having heard of the place, I walked past the entry door probably 3 or 4 times before seeing a group – about 3 or 4 guys – walking towards the place. I recognised one of them as a fellow from a record store in City Arcade, where I had been known to frequent. For whatever reason, that was my impetus to grab the door handle and walk up those stairs, pay the door fee and venture into the club for the first time.

I walked into a place like no other I'd ever seen. A place where men were dancing with men (I don't recall many women being there). Where one would see men showing affection to other men. Somewhere high up was a slide projector flashing 'beefcake' pictures of men onto a screen (as I recall it) hanging from the ceiling. When I first started going there, Connections probably only had one glitter ball, spotlit from time to time to send flashes of light around the room. Later, the number of them increased considerably, becoming (to my eyes) a showcase for spectacular nightclub lighting effects.

Then there was the music. Over the years, one would come to hear disco tracks long before they were heard on commercial radio. When these tracks did appear on radio, they were often in their shortened version, not necessarily the full version – like The Village People's 'San Francisco (You've Got Me)', or, later on, Donna Summer's 17-minute disco classic 'MacArthur Park', reworking an expansion of a classic song. There were a few interesting and/or (now) amusing musical pieces like Dame Edna Everage's 'Disco Matilda' – a disco version of Waltzing Matilda. Then there was ABBA's 'Gimme! Gimme! Gimme! (A Man After Midnight)', a song played after the midnight hour on New Year's Eve after the bells-and-whistles '1812 Overture' ending and the 'over-the-top' musical transition to the New Year at midnight.

Thelma Houston's 'Don't Leave Me This Way' was another song first heard at Connections, and Vickie Sue Robinson's 'Turn the Beat Around' (which might have a different meaning for some Gay men of that era!). With all this music coming (rather loudly) through an amazing sound system, you could sometimes feel it thumping through your chest via the huge speakers.



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Ultimately, Connections was a place for me as a young, nervous, relatively naïve gay man to 'meet my own tribe', as we would say now, and to come to realise that we are not the stereotypes that may have been depicted (or not) in broader society. Finding Connections was an uplifting entrée into the broader LGB (as it was called back then) community.

COLIN YOUNG

(he/him)

I was 18 and had just come out to family and friends. I walked into Connections in about March 1979 with my boyfriend and my brother. I remember the mirror balls and the spacious dance floor. Amy Stewart's 'Knock on Wood' was playing, and I started dancing ecstatically to the thumping bass blaring from the loudspeakers. I was wearing ridiculously tight jeans and a flimsy t-shirt since it was a hot night, accentuated by the pulsating bodies that surrounded us.

Everything was a blur of excitement as I felt I'd found my tribe and alternative family. Afterwards, outside, I asked my straight brother what he'd thought and he simply said: 'It's not my cup of tea.' My boyfriend and I laughed at this. From that point on, I knew Connections was a place I could always feel myself and also meet all kinds of queer people. At that time, it was the only queer venue I knew. It was a wonderland of joyous freedom.

I was wearing ridiculously tight jeans and a flimsy t-shirt since it was a hot night, accentuated by the pulsating bodies that surrounded us.







FROGGIE LA PONDA



Attached to the ceiling was a chain which swung out over the dance floor. As I was swinging away, one of the chains broke and I went flying over the dance floor ...

I worked at Connies 7 different times in the 70s; I've been Bartender, Bar Manager, DJ, Go-Go Boy, and I've performed in many shows. I started working on opening Night as a bartender. Walter – the owner at the time – gave me the task every night before the doors opened to polish the brass lamp at the top of the stairs.

One night, when I was a go-go boy, a sweet and heart-melting thing happened! One of my straight younger brothers was visiting from the East and came to the club. I was up on my podium dancing away in only a G-string. Attached to the ceiling was a chain which swung out over the dance floor. As I was swinging away, one of the chains broke and I went flying over the dance floor ...



As if in slow motion, my brother came running to the dance floor where he caught me – almost naked – in his arms!!! That is one of many-a-story to tell about those fabulous early days of Connections!!!

GRAEME WATSON

(he/him)

I don't know what year I first went to Connections, but I do know the date: April 24th, sometime in the 90s. My friend Robert took me. We climbed up those stairs, and I discovered a new world.

We climbed up those stairs, and I discovered a new world.



At the time, I was still denying to everyone that I was gay, so I was there as an 'ally' with my friend (who clearly saw through my denials). It was a time when being gay still could lead to career death, and, in my workplace, bullying based on sexuality was rife. I loved my job, so that part of me was kept hidden and under wraps.

I remember sitting down on the floor for the drag show – my first one ever! After the show the drag queen said to the crowd, 'It's ANZAC Day in a few hours; rather than going home, go to the dawn service. Go and represent gay people at Gallipoli, because, statistically, some of them had to have been gay.' In that moment, I thought about how life had been for LGBTIQ+ people through the years. My coming out would be years later, but the 24th of April was my first time *stepping* out.







JENNY SAMPEY

I was at the opening weekend of Connies in 1975 as an 18-year-old. I went with my 20-year-old bestie, Trish Moss, who was out (me not so much) in '75. FYI, I also went to the (sleazy as) Top Hat – as it was called before becoming a gay bar named Connections. My memory of the early days was that there were mainly guys at Connies. We – Trish and I – quickly made friends with the boys and drag queens and the odd brothel madame and spent every weekend there. Slowly, girls started to come to Connies too, especially when they knew how welcoming it was.

I moved to London in 1976 and lived there until '79. On return, Connies had fully come of age – there were many more girls and just great times and new friends. By this stage, I was out of the closet. Having the DJ on the floor next to the bar was amazing! The music of the 80s was incredible, and Connections played it all. We would sign to the DJ, almost like track picking ... Being a huge Madonna fan, we would use our arms to make an 'M', and, sure enough, a huge current Madonna hit would be played. Connies always had amazing DJs, the best in Perth. Perth drag was so unique back then, too, not following anybody else's playbook ... just incredible theatre and entertainment, which continues to this day.

Over the years I was involved in the Connie awards and even hosted a few in the 80s. It became so big that it moved to the new Burswood theatre room, where I also hosted. There was also a few – maybe one – Connie Awards held at Club A at Scarborough Beach. That was probably before the awards moved to Burswood ... it's a blur trying to remember the timeline. The gay scene was pumping; I spent every Sunday night at Feathers, other nights at the Clarendon Hotel, The Red Lion ... always ending up at Connections after the others had closed. (The Court Hotel was also an incredible venue when it opened; so much fun and partying. Can't forget DCs, which was a great venue too.)



I am now 68 and still go to Connections as least once a year, usually after Pride Parade. Connections was home to us. I met a new family there and we were always there for each other. Still friends to this day. The AIDS crisis was a time that is still very raw for those of us that were around then. When I think about the beautiful friends we lost ... it was truly devastating. But we had each other and it got us through, and Connections was a big part of helping us all cope with the grief.

*I met a new family there
and we were always there
for each other. Still friends
to this day.*

Congratulations to Denis Marshal and Walter Furlong, who opened Connies in 1975 – you really gave us a home in hostile times. And congratulations to Tim Brown, who took over the reins in the early 90s and co-owns Connections to this day, and to everyone who has called this place home for 50 years. Thank you for the amazing memories. Let's Party!! 🎉

JULIE TOWNSEND

I first climbed the stairs to Connections in 1977. For a young 17-year-old kid who didn't fit in anywhere in life ... The moment I entered Connections and looked around at the magic, I knew I'd found my tribe.

Connections was to me a safe space where I could (tentatively) express myself, make like-minded friends, and celebrate. Connections was joy, and I am forever grateful.

The moment I entered Connections and looked around at the magic, I knew I'd found my tribe.







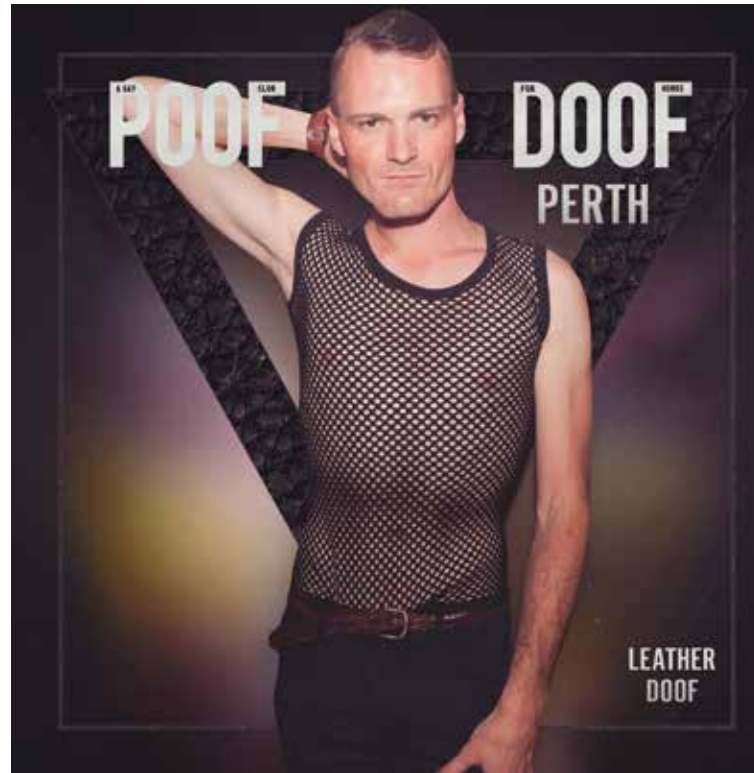
KYLE KASH

(he/him)

I came out at 22 – which I felt was late at the time, becoming an adult in the late 2000's. My years as a young man, walking the time-old passage from one club to the next across the Cultural precinct, will always be cherished. Making friends, discovering drag, marching in the Perth Pride Parade with OUTinPerth, attending the DIVA Awards, and making out with trysts on arrival at Connies ... these remain treasured memories. I found friends and family at Connies in a way I've not discovered anywhere else in the world. Not NYC, not Sydney ... nowhere.

I found friends and family at Connie's in a way I've not discovered anywhere else in the world.

From the days of being covered in rainbow handprints and shirtless dancing after the parade, to seeking shelter in 2017 after being one-punched for not giving a guy 'who voted YES' a cigarette I didn't have, Connie's promised love, safety, and the night to keep us dancing through it all. We partied when we won marriage equality and we mourned communally when the Pulse Nightclub massacre occurred. We danced in the smoke and laughed under the stars, knowing we had a place that treated us as human and loveable.





LISA LUSH

(“Lush”)

🎵 **Those Were the Nights, My Friend** 🎵

Once upon a time, we'd head to Northbridge
We'd climb those stairs, our hearts about to burst
With smoke and lights and laughter all around us
At Connections – see who'd get trade first.

*Those were the nights, my friend
We thought they'd never end
We'd dance and shine forever and a day
We'd live the dream we knew
In sequins, pink, and blue
Oh yes, those were the nights –
At Connie's, we were gay!*

The DJ spun Madonna and some disco
And boys in lace were posing by the bar
The queens would sashay down that bloody staircase
As if they thought they'd be a movie star.

*Those were the nights, my friend,
We thought they'd never end,
We'd dance and sing forever and a day
We'd love without disguise
Beneath those neon skies
Oh yes, those were the nights –
At Connie's, we were gay!*

Through disco fog we found our tribe and freedom
Each heartbeat pulsed in time with flashing lights
When daylight came, we stumbled out together
Still glittered gods from golden Perth nights.

*Those were the nights, my friend
We thought they'd never end
We'd kiss and laugh forever for a day
Though time may fade the tune
Beneath that mirrored moon
We'll always hear the song –
At Connies, we were gay!*

So, raise a glass to every lost connection
And every drag queen who once stole the show
The music fades but still inside we're dancing
At Connections, where our hearts will always glow...

Happy Birthday, Connies! You made me the Lush I am today.





PETER MURPHY

My first experience going to Connections was through a workmate of mine who worked at the large retail store where I worked in the 70s. He asked me whether I had been to Connections. I answered that I hadn't. He said it was a gay nightclub. I was in my early 20s and was very unsure if I should go. Plus, I had never been asked out by another man. This was really a first for me, but I decided to see what it was like.

I was in my early 20s and was very unsure if I should go. Plus, I had never been asked out by another man. This was really a first for me ...

I remember walking up the straight flight of stairs to the Club. There was someone at the end of the stairs who let us in. I felt very nervous but also very excited about what it was like! I enjoyed the atmosphere so much that I felt I had to return, so I got used to going there often and having a great time. This was in the 70s when the disco music featured a lot of ABBA songs. I loved 'Dancing Queen'. The dance floor was always so crowded and so was the bar. I remember some of the guys used to stand near the male toilets in the hope they could pick up someone for the night.



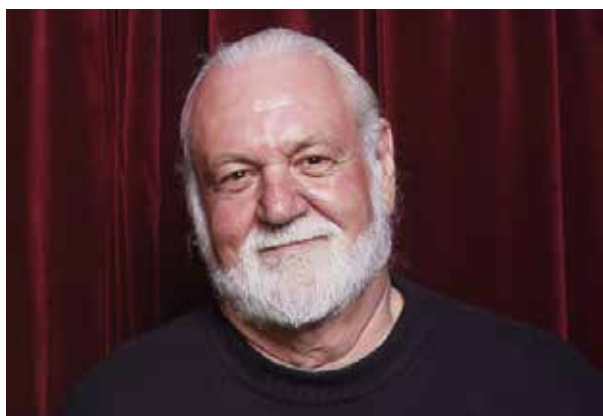
Connections was always a great place to hang out and meet people. When I finished work of a Friday night, I really looked forward to going to Connies. Sometimes we would dance all night until about 6.00am the next morning. Unfortunately, I would have to go to work the next morning with a hangover and throwing up. I decided I wouldn't repeat that too often.

A big congratulations to Connections Night Club for operating in Perth for 50 years. It's the longest running Gay Nightclub in Australia.

TIM GRANT

Connies and Me

It was around 1979 when a dear family friend first took me to Connections. We were there to support their friend's debut drag performance. While the show itself was fairly average, the energy of the place was something else – exciting, electric, and unlike anything I'd experienced before. It both thrilled and intimidated me. Although, it would be months before I mustered the courage to return. When I did, I dressed in my best casual beach gear (I was a surfer at the time) and walked in with trembling nerves. The first question I was asked by the doorman was 'Are you gay?' which hit me like a bolt. That moment was a huge hurdle. I wasn't even sure how to answer that question confidently to myself yet. No one spoke to me that first night, but I knew I had to come back, and deep down I knew that this was to be my new tribe.



Fairly quickly I made friends. I don't recall exactly when I met my first real friend, but soon I was spending time with a group of vibrant lesbians and larger-than-life drag queens. The nights became wild, loud, and full of mischief – flirting, partying, and endless laughter. There was a sense of belonging I hadn't felt before. To this day, I'm still in touch with some of those first wonderful friends. My circle widened after I connected with many like-minded gay friends at 'the club'. That experience helped me

open up to others and gave me the confidence to embrace the world more honestly.

Climbing the long staircase into Connies was always a moment of anticipation. The pulse of the music, the loud noise of people laughing and chatting was intoxicating. At the top, Colin Griffiths, the manager, with his long flowing hair and signature tight black leather pants, was often there to greet you. He'd kiss his friends and subtly size up everyone else as they arrived. The bar was unusually high, reaching above my chest, with the barmen standing elevated on a platform. Ordering the cheap beer while gazing up at those cheeky, handsome barmen made me feel like a dizzy schoolboy.

The first question I was asked by the doorman was 'Are you gay?' which hit me like a bolt. That moment was a huge hurdle.

And then there were *The Stray Girls*. Their drag performances were nothing short of world-class. They'd strut, mime, and dazzle to the most eclectic music. The crowd would gather close to the stage, sitting on the dance floor, cheering and hooting in appreciation. Their handmade costumes were often breathtaking, tragically all lost later in a storeroom fire (thankfully, the blaze was contained).

Leaving Connections at the end of a night out was never simple. Everyone was gloriously drunk, so there were always endless hugs, kisses, and last-minute stories before ascending the challenging stairs. Many a stumble, twisted ankle, and fall occurred – but always with joy and camaraderie. Outside, small crowds would often gather to witness this flamboyant, joyful exodus. Some were curious, others perhaps closeted. Luckily, I never faced violence or abuse, though some friends weren't as fortunate.

Connections was more than a nightclub – it was a sanctuary, a family, and, for many of us, the place we first found ourselves.





TIM BROWN

(he/him)

Earlier in our 50th year, we had the idea to do another party. A staff party. One for anyone who had ever worked at Connections. There are about one hundred people currently on the payroll at Connections and, although it hasn't always been that large, multiplying out that number over 50 years makes one realise just how many people have come together to make the magic that is Connections night after night. To throw that party for everyone else and make it seem effortless; to allow people to let loose, lose themselves to dance, but to make sure that they are safe and that they're treating themselves and others with respect. No mean feat at 3 in the morning!

It takes a hell of a lot of work to make all that happen, and even more for all of you to not notice it. But it's a wonderful thing, and that party made many of us realise how lucky we were to have had this experience. In my speech at that party, I said:

Most people go out clubbing when they're in their prime, for only a few years. They're young and carefree and, very often, these are the best years of their lives. That's why everyone always says, 'It's not as good as it used to be.' But it absolutely is, for anyone experiencing that time right now. It always was and always will be.

We got the chance – and we continue to get the chance – to make the best years of people's lives.

We, however, are a particularly blessed bunch. We got to work in that time—the best years of people's lives and maybe our own, too (whenever that might have been). We got the chance—and we continue to get the chance—to make the best years of people's lives. And, we get to have had fun with some incredibly amazing people whilst we did and do it. That's not something you can put on a work resume but it's sure as hell going on my life resume, and I hope you can think of it like that too.



That kind of sums it up. For Connections, and for those of us who have worked there.

My Dad once said to me in anger, 'You'll never understand until you've had children of your own.' And I replied, 'Dad, I've raised more children than you could imagine.'

Being an incredibly handy and capable man, my dad worked with us once on a renovation, rebuilding and restoring that beautiful jarrah main bar (he did also build several Pride floats and many, many other things). Some time later, on a day when we found ourselves sitting together having a sandwich for lunch, Dad looked up at me and said, 'I understand. You have quite a family.'



You see, as LGBTI people, we know, more than most, that we get two families. The one that's given and the one we choose (or maybe it chooses us). We, at Connections, have a family that spans generations. And, like all families, ours is fuelled by strong emotions and passions. Emotions and passions that bind us so closely together that one could only call us family. We too, could write a book ... but *that* one is certainly unpublishable!

The photo above shows the Connections staff at closing time – probably 6 or 7 in the morning after another long night. Somewhere in the early 2000s, I reckon, from the set of faces in it. A grainy Polaroid snapped in the moment. And there have been thousands of these moments. Moments of such joy and camaraderie. Exhaustion too, but it doesn't show on anybody's face. Photos like this make me smile, make me so proud of this other family that I have been given.

In the end, it's only a couple of buildings, bricks and mortar, gaffa tape, glitter, and a faint whiff of amy! ... But it's much more than that, because it's filled with life, with stories. 50 years of the people who worked so hard every night to make it happen, and 50 years of people finding joy, freedom and release under disco lights. Finding themselves and finding their community.





We only came to party !



MEDUSA MAKES HERSTORY.

Women came from far and wide for this herstory making event. After 177 years as a gay male domain, Connections nightclub endured Medusa's big #1. women for the first time had this club all to themselves for 'four hours'. Never before had the club acknowledged the lesbian population of W.A. until we asked them (management). Medusa hosted 350 women 'wall to wall' at the new look club, (by new look we mean white walls and de-chewing gummed carpet.)

Dj Rachel did a wonderful job of keeping women dancing although some women unused to club atmosphere did seem to suffer at times from a volume level designed to send ones senses into another dimension, but gosh we were all women eh? Lots of women came to us with comments like "thank you this fantastic?" and more with "gee I've waited for a decade now to have Women Only at this club" and "it's about f'cking time, good onya".

We really partied on and as usual women drank vast amounts of alcohol, thereby injecting a very big profit to Connections with the generous patronage that this lesbian community is capable of outpouring, at the time we held this event the club was pretty desperate for clientele and the Connies versus Dc's saga was in full swing. So again, Medusa hosting women's nights at a boys club pulls those clubs onto another level just like we did this time last year when we started our fundraisers at the then dormant DC's. the clubs are starting to realised Medusa can generate them income, but alas they still refuse lesbians women only access on Friday or Saturday nights because the men are too important to turn away **EVEN ONCE A MONTH.** Perth does seem to be the last frontier for women only events and parties nationwide. Aren't we lucky???

We only came to party !

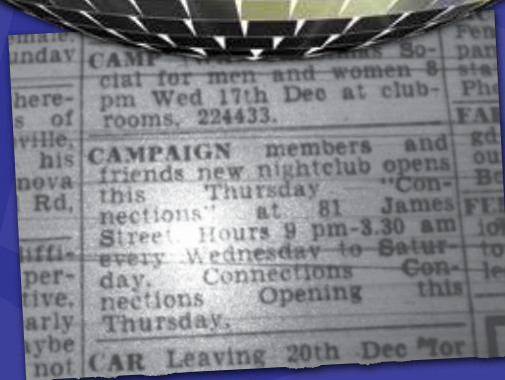
The most annoyed comments of Medusa's Birthday was "that the atmosphere really changed at midnight when the men had to be let in, as we always tell managers "at least two thirds of the women will leave at that point taking their money with them". As predicted the men do not spend like the women do and both clubs could do well to start to treat the women of perth fairly.

The final comment that has to be made is that after 177 years as a night club one would think Connections would have profitted substantially enough **\$\$\$\$** from this gay community to renovate both toilets, by firstly putting **MORE** in, as clients we have a right to a higher health and safety standard in venues patronised by the lesbian and gay communities.

As we began our setting up that night, Linde Ivimey appeared before us with a fabulous sculptured cake for Medusa's Birthday (see above), totally blew us away with such a splendid gift, we did end up eating her after much procrastination and just not wanting to put knife to such creativity. But we did and found her to be the most succulent and moist fruit cake covered in butter icing, the whole thing edible and delicious. Thank you Linde **XXXX**

Medusa has her fingers crossed that come **October** when the **Lesbian Extravaganza** will once again kick off **GAY PRIDE** month in Perth, that one of the Gay clubs will give over a **FRIDAY** or **SATURDAY** night to lesbians for longer than just **FOUR** hours!

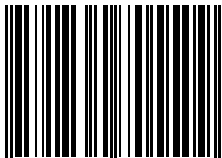




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