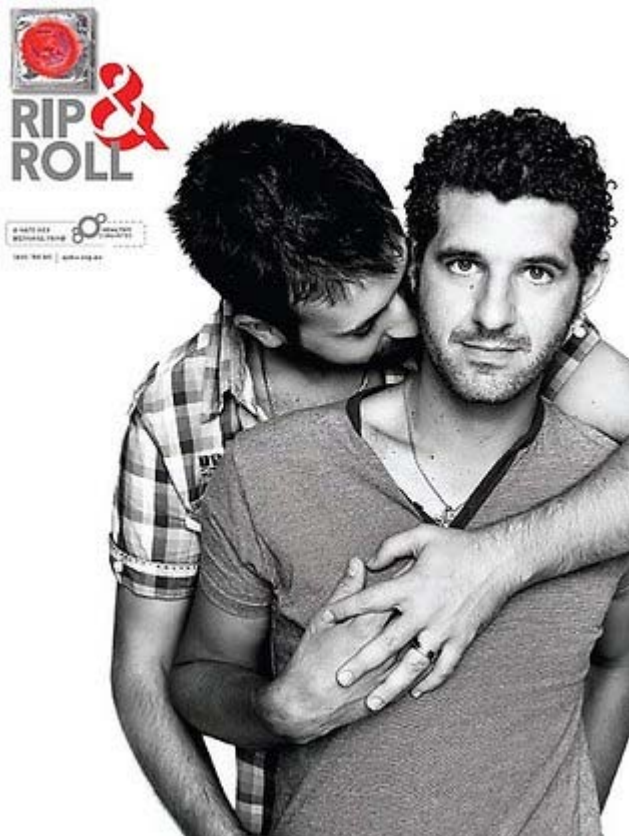


The Australian

From agencies and News Limited publications:

Queensland Premier Anna Bligh declines to vie for Australian Christian Lobby votes before election

- From: AAP
- February 08, 2012 6:29PM



Anger erupted after ads for a public campaign to raise awareness of increased HIV infections was pulled following a campaign by the Australian Christian Lobby.

Source: Supplied

QUEENSLAND Labor has denied it snubbed a Christian lobby group's forum, saying a Labor minister had been rejected by the group for political reasons.

The Australian Christian Lobby (ACL) claims Ms Bligh and Deputy Premier Andrew Fraser snubbed Christians by declining to attend today's event at the University of Queensland.

The pair was unavailable and Labor offered to send Health Minister Geoff Wilson in their place, but ACL declined as it wanted party leaders.

Liberal National Party (LNP) leader Campbell Newman is attending.

Australian Catholic University political analyst Scott Prasser said voters deserved to hear from the leaders.

"We're in election mode," he told AAP.

"It was the Labor Party's choice to send a messenger boy rather than the leader.

"If I was in the position of the ALP, where I'm trailing dramatically in the polls, I would certainly have attended to argue my case.

"That's what politics is supposed to be about."

Mr Fraser said it was "churlish of the ACL to deny the offer of Minister Wilson attending".

Mr Fraser said Mr Wilson had attended the event before the last election, but ACL Queensland director Wendy Francis denied that was the case.

"Because the premier's office and the Queensland Labor campaign office delayed and delayed until it was too late, no forum was held at the 2009 election," Mrs Francis said.

Mr Fraser said Mrs Francis, a former Senate candidate for Family First, was one of the most vocal opponents of Labor's civil partnerships laws.

"I accept that that's perfectly legitimate and I'm glad for a political robust debate, but I just invite people to draw their own conclusions," he said.

Mr Newman has said he personally supports same-sex civil unions, despite his party voting in a block against Labor's bill.

The legislation was passed 47 votes to 40, with Labor MPs given a conscience vote.

Katter's Australian Party today announced it would repeal the laws if it formed a government, before criticising Mr Newman for funding a controversial gay safe-sex billboard advertisement while he was Brisbane's lord mayor.

State leader Aidan McLindon said under Mr Newman's watch, the council provided more than \$100,000 over seven years in grants for Healthy Communities, the organisation that ran the campaign.

"One has to wonder, 'Is this a socially conservative party or not?'" he said of the LNP. Healthy Communities said the Rip and Roll ads were funded by the Queensland government.

Ms Bligh was in north Queensland on Wednesday for a Townsville Bulletin-hosted debate, which Mr Newman declined to attend.

Mr Newman defended his decision, saying he would debate Ms Bligh during the election campaign.
