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No pride in genocide!
Takeaways from the 2023 Mardi Gras AGM

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"PiP" stands for Pride in Protest, a mass organisation of queer activists fighting for popular power and social control of pride, kicking cops out of queer community events and to defend against the assault on queer rights. More information here: <https://prideinprotest.medium.com/>

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Takeaways from the 2023 Mardi Gras AGM

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On the 9th of December Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras held its annual general meeting. Since the creation of Pride in Protest, the organisation has contested and politicised the meetings by running radical motions and their own slate of candidates for the board. 2023 was no different. The previous year, Mardi Gras refused to hear PiP's motions and at the AGM before that right-wing members attempted to expel members of Pride in Protest and Community Action for Rainbow Rights whilst also trying to compel Mardi Gras to take these organisations to court. This year however the motions were to be heard and debated.

PiP re-ran previous motions to kick out cops and screws from marching in the parade, tear up the police accords, supporting gender affirmation leave, as well as removing Amex and Qantas as sponsors of the parade. Supplementing this was a motion to support the Equality Bill that also barred politicians who don't support the bill from the parade. A motion to get Mardi Gras to sign PiP's open letter in support of drag artists was also moved (which crucially argues that payment should be given to artists if a performance is canceled due threats

of violence, a necessary industrial demand). Finally, PiP ran a motion calling for BDS, and barring financial support from the state of Israel. This motion also condemned the Albanese government for not standing with the Palestinian people and the Minn's government for attempting to disrupt and smash protests in support of Palestinian liberation.

This year was a major breakthrough with the motions in support of gender affirmation leave, the drag open letter, and crucially the equality bill motion passing. The latter is a serious blow to politicians that pinkwash themselves at the parade whilst doing nothing to materially support the community in parliament. If enforced, it will effectively bar members of the Liberal party from the parade. The motion to kick out cops and screws was unfortunately not supported by the membership. However the motion to tear up the parade police accords was passed. The accords have long been controversial within the community as they allow the police to conduct decency inspections at the parade with Mardi Gras support – a gross violation of people's autonomy. Unfortunately, in order for it to pass, the part of the motion that supported police abolition had to be split out and voted on separately, which was shamefully voted down.

The AGM took a heated turn when a procedural motion was moved and voted up that denied anyone from speaking for or against three PiP motions, the first being the Palestine solidarity/BDS motion. When the membership voted this motion down, shouts erupted from PiP and its supporters decrying the organisation and the majority of the membership for supporting genocide. PiP members got up and spoke to the motion in protest despite being barred from doing so and disrupted the AGM until members were threatened to be kicked out.

The next motion voted on was the motion to cancel AMEX as a sponsor. This was in solidarity with sex workers who'd lost payment processing for Backpage, a website that workers had used for adult services which AMEX along with other ma-

for payment processors have blocked. Furthermore it called on Mardi Gras to support pro-active legal changes through the Equality Bill, full decriminalisation in NSW, and for sex workers to be included in the Anti-Discrimination Act. This motion was also voted down to great protest. As was the Qantas motion that called for the removal of the company as a sponsor due to its role in deporting refugees to danger.

What followed after the AGM was of as much political importance – if not more so – than what happened within it. Clover Moore, clearly concerned with how the Safety Summit would be perceived by the community now that the police accords were voted down, disinvited the cops from the event. Even more significant was the Mardi Gras CEO Gil Beckwith, caving to community outrage after the Palestine motion was voted down, wrote a letter to the PM calling for a ceasefire and ruling out Israeli sponsorship of the parade. This victory was a win for the whole community, as it was their pressure, lit by the failure of the PiP motion that made this change possible.

Moving forward, PiP will need to be proactive in applying pressure to make sure that these motions are taken up by the board, as they aren't binding. More broadly, queer liberation activists will hopefully spread the struggle to all of the queer organisations across the country. Let 2024 be the year where Israel can no longer pinkwash genocide, and where the cops and screws can no longer march amongst our community!