



Media Alert

Queenslanders call on Bligh Government to actively prevent homophobic bullying in Schools

Release of Galaxy Poll
22 January 2009

Lesbian and gay community advocates have welcomed the results of a new opinion poll demonstrating that Queenslanders support further gay law reforms. The Galaxy poll conducted in December 2008 found that a majority of Queenslanders support civil unions, marriage and full legal recognition of same sex parents.

Significantly there was almost complete agreement that schools should actively prevent and respond to homophobic bullying. A staggering (96%) of Queenslanders support a proactive approach by Education Queensland to make schools a safe and positive experience for all young Queenslanders.

Coordinator of Open Doors Youth Service Lisa Thorpy welcomes this finding and has called on the Queensland Government to enact the will of the people.

“In 2008 we released ‘There’s No Place Like Home’ a report into the health, housing and wellbeing of LGBT young people in Queensland. This research found that schools were a significant source of distress for LGBT young people with 81% of respondents reporting that they had been bullied for their sexuality at school but only 12% reported that the school took action to stop the bullying”, Thorpy said.

Many young people felt so afraid at school that they had missed over two school week’s schooling and 16% of participants reported that they had to change schools because of the intensity of bullying they endured.

Shockingly bullying not only came from students; adults such as teachers, school administrators and parents also bullied LGBT students.

Thorpy said “clearly current school anti-bullying measures do not adequately protect gay students; this is providing a discriminatory and unsafe educational environment for gay students and schools need to take further actions to ensure ALL students are safe at school.

“Given that LGBT young people report extensive maltreatment and lack of support, it is unsurprising that they also report high rates of self harm and suicide attempts” said Thorpy. Nonetheless the rates are startling – within the past 12 months 82% of respondents had considered suicide and 37% of these young people had attempted suicide while 59% of them had self harmed.

A copy of the full report and the Galaxy Poll is available from the Open Doors Website on www.opendoors.net.au

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