



PFLAG Brisbane

Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays

Newsletter July/ August 2012

Keeping Families Together

Hi Everyone,

At our last meeting we welcomed Paul Martin, Principal of The Centre for Human Potential as guest speaker.

Paul brought his extensive experience in working in the LGBTI field, and his usual *joire de vivre* to the meeting and we thank him for his ongoing support of PFLAG.

Our guest speaker for the next meeting on Saturday 4th August is Penny Spalding from the Queensland Teacher's Union.

Committee member Janet Berry, on behalf of PFLAG, has constructed a letter to be submitted to the QTU for inclusion in their professional journal which is sent to 44,000 teachers across the state in an effort to highlight the issue of homophobic bullying in schools and offer practical advice about how to address it.

Queensland lags behind other state education authorities in Australia in the provision of a clear stance on addressing homophobia in our schools.

In other states such as Victoria, South Australia and Western Australia, education departments provide clear information and policy statements about addressing homophobia in schools on their websites.

Education Queensland's website states generally that homophobia and racism are not to be tolerated and that comprehensive decisive action must be taken to address these issues in schools when they occur.

More specific information is not easily found on the EQ website.

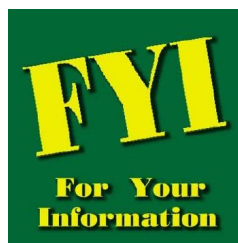
The department's Inclusive Education policy states that it supports schools in building communities that value, celebrate and respond positively to diversity, but by grouping homophobia and racism under a generic umbrella does not respect the inherent complexity of either issue.

EQ's statements do little to provide practical guidelines for school staff or parents seeking information on the issue.

A web search of Brisbane's largest private school websites found little or no reference to bullying policies and no reference specifically to homophobic bullying which is interesting given that they are mainly single sex schools.

Efforts have been made to speak with both Education Queensland and independent school representatives about this issue, but this has largely been unsuccessful so far.

Pip :-)



Some Definitions

Heterosexism

The belief that everyone is, or should be, heterosexual and that other types of sexualities or

gender identities are unhealthy, unnatural and a threat to society. Heterosexism includes both homophobia and transphobia and a fear of intersex people who challenge the heterosexist assumption that there are only two sexes.

Homophobia

The fear and hatred of lesbians and gay men and of their sexual desires and practices that often leads to discriminatory behaviour or abuse.

Writing Themselves In 3 (WTi3), (The third national study on the sexual health and wellbeing of same sex attracted and gender questioning young people)



PFLAG Writes Itself In

This information for schools has been written by Janet Berry for PFLAG (Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays) Brisbane.

Our website provides a range of information for LGBT people and their friends and family:
<http://www.pflagbrisbane.org.au/>

Stand up for equality and do not allow homophobic bullying

Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) students do not choose to be the way they are.

They have a right, as do all students, to feel safe at school and be free from bullying.

Homophobic bullying in schools may be displayed in many ways, physical harassment, verbal taunting or discrimination.

It is illegal to discriminate against someone because of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

How do students suffer?

Gay and lesbian students struggle with their sexuality and often go through their teenage years hiding who they really are.

They may be scared to tell their parents and don't know who else to turn to for support.

If they experience bullying at school it may be the last straw. Bullying of LGBT students may contribute to high drop-out rates, homelessness, drug and alcohol abuse and suicide.

What other states are doing?

In other states, Victoria, South Australia and Western Australia, education departments provide information on homophobia on their websites.

They encourage a non-discriminatory atmosphere in schools and the provision of support for young people who are struggling to come to terms with their sexuality.

What you can do

Please do not ignore homophobic bullying as this encourages ongoing discrimination.

Tackle any incidents immediately and have the courage to state what is right.

Be an advocate for equality and stand up for gay and lesbian students.

Provide help and support to young gay and lesbian students and help them to find information.

There are many resources on the internet.

A whole-school approach to student safety and wellbeing is most effective in preventing incidents of homophobic bullying.

The school environment should respect diversity and communicate to all members of the school community that everyone has the right to feel physically and psychologically safe.

When schools fail to challenge homophobia, they give a clear message that homophobia is OK

WTi3: Writing Themselves In

The 3rd National Survey on the sexual health and wellbeing of same sex attracted and gender questioning young people was published in 2010 by La Trobe University.

Over 3400 people responded to this third national survey Writing Themselves In (WTi3) of same sex attracted and gender questioning young people (SSAGQ) through the website URL www.wti3.org.au.

In the study, 61% of young people reported verbal abuse because of homophobia.

- 18% of young people reported physical abuse because of homophobia (school was the most likely place of abuse).
- 69% reported other forms of homophobia including exclusion and rumours.
- Young men and GQ (gender queer) young people reported more abuse than young women.

The authors learned from the previous two national reports that same sex attracted young people suffer high levels of verbal and physical homophobic abuse in the community and particularly at school. A smaller number suffer homophobic abuse in their homes.

They found that homophobia has a profound impact on the psychological wellbeing of young same-sex attracted young people, resulting in increased rates of depression, self harm, and attempted suicide.

This is a significant concern for schools. The findings also indicated that:

80% of all the abuse happened at school

37% described their school as homophobic or very homophobic

2 times the number of young people who suffered verbal abuse had attempted suicide, compared to those who reported no abuse

4.5 times the number of young people who had been physically assaulted had attempted suicide, compared to those who reported no abuse.

The data reported in Writing Themselves In 3 provides “substantial evidence of the significant contribution to the mental health of same sex attracted young people made by schools which had policies against homophobic abuse, with students at these schools being generally less likely to self harm.

More significant was the finding that young people, who reported their school as having a supportive environment, were less likely to harm themselves or attempt suicide demonstrating the importance of putting policy into practice.

<http://www.glhv.org.au/report/writing-themselves-3-wti3-report>



The authors of Writing Themselves In conducted an overview of Australian sexuality education initiatives and revealed the following shortcomings:

- Information about heterosexual relationships was easily accessed and readily available with most young people learning about this topic from family, media, friends and school.
- Information about gay and lesbian relationships was far more difficult to access. Around half had received information about gay and lesbian relationships from the media and friends, one-tenth from the family and about 15% from school.
- With regard to safe-sex information, four out of five young people learned about heterosexual safe sex from school and the media, and about half from family and friends.
- At school, there was little information about gay or lesbian safe-sex and the situation was even worse in the context of the family.
- Rural young people had more difficulty accessing information about gay and heterosexual safe sex, than young people from metropolitan areas.

Advocate Advocate Advocate Advocate

A lobby meeting will be held on Saturday, 18th August to discuss ideas on how we can make the Queensland government understand what they are doing to our same sex attracted sons and daughters.

I am hoping people will come to the meeting with ideas and skills on how to implement positive change for this State.

We need to make the Government realise how hurtful repealing legislation of gay rights is; not only on our sons and daughters but their families as well.

I will be away most of August, for those who may try to make prior contact, but please come along with your ideas and how they can be implemented.

It is time for us to stand up and be counted. We need to make it clear we are proud parents of our gay sons and lesbian daughters and we are Queenslanders who don't want to go back to the homophobic attitudes that once existed in this State.

Shelley Argent Ph 0409-363-335

Let the Future be Kinder and More Just than the Past

LAUNCH OF NEW CAMPAIGN FOR EQUALITY FOR GAY QUEENSLANDERS

Queenslanders from various communities are joining forces to take on the Newman Government's focus on taking rights away from gay and lesbian Queenslanders.

A new organisation fighting for equality has been launched, called *Queenslanders for Equality*, and the Premier will be challenged to govern for all Queenslanders and end his attack on the rights of GLBTI Queenslanders.

The launch of the new group was held on Sunday 22nd July at New Farm Park and was attended in part by Labor Opposition Leader Annastacia Palaszczuk, Labor MP Jackie Trad, PFLAG spokesperson Shelley Argent, gay farmer David Graham, psychologist Paul Martin, family lawyer Stephen Page, priest Ray Richmond, and Australian Marriage Equality National Convener Alex Greenwich

In particular the group will campaign for the protection of current surrogacy laws and draw attention to an official petition calling on these laws to be protected.



**Our next meeting is at 1.30 p.m.
Saturday 4th August
30 Helen St Teneriffe**

Guest Speaker: Penny Spalding from the QTU



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Talking to Someone Who Really Understands Makes it So Much Easier

Working through some of the deeper emotional issues with having a gay or lesbian son or daughter can be one of the most painful and stressful experiences of your life. Counselling is a highly effective way of feeling better and also can assist in keeping your family together. *Centre for Human Potential* have been working with parents of gays, lesbians and transgender for over 15 years. Contact one of our friendly psychologists to explore whether counselling can be of real benefit to you and your family, or simply call and book a time with one of us.

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Email: info@centreforhumanpotential.com.au



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***I always wondered why somebody
doesn't do
something about that. Then I
realised I was somebody.***

Lily Tomlin

Michele Lindsay Queer Counsellor

Individual and relationship counselling

Mobile 0439 157 422 | Email mvlindsay@yahoo.com.au



Keeping Families Together

PFLAG is very proactive in promoting acceptance and understanding of people who disclose their sexual diversity to family and loved ones. Parents often feel isolated, confused or angry when their loved one 'comes out' and this is an important area where PFLAG can offer assistance.

**Join us at our meetings, held every 2 months or contact us by
phone: 0400 767 832 or email: info@pflagbrisbane.org.au**

PFLAG Brisbane Annual Membership Form

Please complete the form below and return to PFLAG.

You can also pay online - www.pflagbrisbane.org.au

Larger donations are always welcome. Thanks for your support.

Name: _____

Ph: _____

Mailing Address: _____

Email: _____

Membership Type:

Family - \$25.00 annually - I have included a cheque or Australia Post Money Order made out to PFLAG Brisbane Inc.

Corporate - \$100.00 annually - (includes website and newsletter advertising) I have included a cheque or Australia Post Money Order made out to PFLAG Brisbane Inc.

Mail to: PO Box 1372, Eagle Farm BC Qld. 4009

Bring to: 30 Helen St, Teneriffe 4006

Pay Online: www.pflagbrisbane.org.au

Pay direct deposit: Account Name - PFLAG Brisbane

BSB - 124-001

Account No - 2023-8607

Bank of Queensland

Please make sure you provide us with your contact details (name, email and /or postal address so we can receipt your payment and ensure you receive our newsletters.