



PFLAG Brisbane

Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays

Newsletter August/September 2011

Keeping Families Together

Welcome to the latest edition of the PFLAG newsletter. We had plenty of positive feedback about last edition's new look and so we'll continue to develop its fresh, contemporary feel and make changes along the way until we have the mix just right, so... watch this spot!

The July meeting was very well attended and it was great to see some new faces. Psychologist Paul Martin was our guest speaker. You can read more about his presentation on page 5. Many thanks to Paul for donating his time once again. The September meeting details are on page 7.

One wonderful thing about our meetings is that there is such a wealth of experience in the group, and so much support and acceptance creating a safe environment for you to express your views, ask for advice, help and support from regular people who quite probably have experienced what you are going through. You can attend as many or as few meetings as you like. The format tends to be informal and you can contribute as much or as little as you like. It's a pretty special group.

I hope you enjoy this edition of the PFLAG newsletter and please contact us if you have ideas or contributions for subsequent ones.



On the 27th July, a group of 25 PFLAG parents met with Mr. Robert McClelland, the Attorney General to discuss the issue of marriage equality. The lunch held at the Brisbane Club was a great success. It gave parents who wouldn't normally have the opportunity to speak with a government leader about how they, as parents, felt regarding their sons' and daughters' right and choice to marry their partner.

We do understand that Mr. McClelland cannot change policy alone, but he can report back to Parliament about our concerns and wishes. We provided him with hard copies and photos of each parent who attended story, to make this action easier. He stated he would hand the stories on to Ms. Gillard.



27th alone attended attorney brisbane change choice club copies daughters discuss easier equality felt gave general gillard government

group hard held issue leader lunch marriage marry mcclelland met mr ms normally opportunity

parents parliament partner pflag photos policy provided regarding report robert sons speak stated
story success understand wishes wouldn



Brisbane's rally for marriage equality was well supported on Saturday 13th August by a vocal crowd at Queen's Park in the heart of the city. The rally was part of a national day of action on the 7th anniversary of the ban of LGBTI marriage by the Howard Government who changed Australia's marriage act to prevent "Gay Marriage".

A Galaxy poll taken earlier this year showed that 75% of Australians either agree with same sex marriage or don't care, with 22% actually stating their opposition to it. Later this year the federal ALP will debate this issue at a national party level. (QNews online)



Advocate

Shelley, Kath and Julie have been regularly travelling to Canberra meeting with politicians about the issue of marriage equality. And, as usual take stories and information they feel relevant to the issue. Because it is now the Winter Break, information packs have been sent to their local offices.

If you would like your personal story told regarding the lack of equality for your son or daughter please send it to Shelley at pflagbris@bigpond.com and she will gladly send it to every federal MP and Senator. Even though PFLAG is primarily a support group for parents we believe it's also important to be speaking for our sons and daughters equal rights. And, as the parent body, we are often told we are the most powerful group, so we can't stop until we succeed.

Celebrating
a life takes
planning.

We give you
time.



When you lose someone, we understand the first thing you need is time. Time to plan, to reflect, to remember the special moments. Time to celebrate a life well-lived.

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|--------------|-----------|--------------|-----------|
| ALBANY CREEK | 3325 5055 | KELVIN GROVE | 3356 4430 |
| CLEVELAND | 3286 5069 | REDCLIFFE | 3284 5268 |
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Advocate

This month Shelley met with Prime Minister Julia Gillard in her office, accompanied by Rodney Croome from Australian Marriage Equality, Paul Martin, a Brisbane psychologist and Dr. Kerryn Phelps and her partner Jacki Stricker. The respectful and polite meeting lasted for nearly an hour. Rodney talked about the feelings of family, Paul talked about the mental health issues of feeling second rate, Kerryn and Jacki talked about their relationship being valid in life but not currently in law, and how in NSW they can adopt which they have, but can't marry to provide the so called 'stable' home. Shelley talked about how we as parents wanted our sons and daughters to be treated equally and how we want to be able to celebrate their relationships with them. She also pointed out how the Prime Minister herself wasn't in a conventional relationship, how she had choices and how her opinion influenced the Labor MP's, which the Prime Minister denied. Ms Gillard insisted that her problem is she doesn't feel the need for marriage, and put this down to her feminism in the 70's at university. The visitors however left encouraged that Ms Gillard said there will not be a conscience vote before the Labor National Conference in December and she would go along with the decisions made at the conference.

What's On?

October

8th

International Lesbian Day

Saturday 8th October 2011 at the Wickham Hotel, Wickham Street, Fortitude Valley, Brisbane. From 12pm to 5pm

Cost: \$5.00 Kids are free

This is a fundraising event for the Lesbian Health Action Group (LHAG) a non-for-profit organisation under the QAHC umbrella Contact Una for more details.

M: 0448 933 285

E: missus_kat@yahoo.com.au

W: www.qahc.org.au/lesbian

PFLAG is having a stall and needs volunteers for the day. If you can help please contact Una. Two volunteers get in free.

15th

Sunshine Coast Gay Pride Fair

Saturday 15th October 2011

The Sunshine Coast's 4th

Annual

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Pride Fair 10am - 4pm \$2.00 Entry

University of the Sunshine Coast Uni Club



Thank You



Many thanks to Paul Martin, psychologist and principal of the Centre for Human Potential who is a great friend of PFLAG.

Paul's input is always practical and topical. At our last meeting Paul elaborated on the issue of internalised homophobia and invited us to challenge some of our beliefs about ourselves and each other. The discussion was purposeful and thought provoking and we offer more information on this topic on the next pages.



Many thanks, to the Sportsman's Hotel for its very successful "Great Bake Off" once again.

A great day was had by all. Funds will be divided between Australian Transgender Support Qld. and PFLAG.

So a big thank you, to the Sportsman's Hotel and everyone who baked and was so generous with their time, talents and financial support.

Plus a big thank you to the PFLAG parents who came along to volunteer and support the day.



Gambling Community Benefit Fund: We are glad to announce that we have been provided with a laptop computer and printer.

The laptop will make life simpler for Shelley when she travels and will serve as a permanent base for all PFLAG information.

The printer is an absolute godsend which will stay permanently in the office at QAHC because the printer there is beyond repair. Large amounts of printing won't be done on it, but it again will make the volunteers' work in the office much easier.

So a big thank you to the Gambling Community Benefit Fund for their ongoing support of PFLAG in our efforts to support families, educate the general community and advocate for equality for our sons and daughters.



At the Theatre

The Sum of Us

John Jarratt (Wolf Creek, McLeod's Daughters, Better Homes and Gardens) stars in a modern Australian classic. *The Sum of Us* is a bitter sweet comedy that revolves around the devoted and loving relationship between widower, Harry, and his homosexual son, Jeff, and their individual searches for a partner. Jeff is interested in Greg, a young public works gardener he met at a local pub and Harry begins dating Joyce, a woman he met through a dating service. Harry's unconditional love and acceptance of his son's sexuality is a bit too daunting for Greg, whose homophobic father keeps Greg in the closet and wary of the comfortable relationship Harry and Jeff share. The play illuminates the eternal human need to transcend our separateness, to embark upon the difficult but necessary road to an accepting and loving connection with others.

Brisbane Performances
Thursday 15 September, 8.00pm
Friday 16 September, 8.00pm
Saturday 17 September, 2.00pm and 8.00pm
Tickets
Adult \$38 | Concession \$30 | Groups (10+) \$30 | Student or 24 and under \$24 | \$4 discount for matinee | School groups \$16
http://www.gardenstheatre.qut.edu.au/whatson/2011/sum_of_us.jsp

At the Movies

Beginners

A young man is rocked by two announcements from his elderly father: that he has terminal cancer, and that he has a young male lover. Starring Ewan McGregor and Christopher Plummer. In theatres now.

<http://www.abc.net.au/atthemovies>



Print Media

Lobby group *Get Up* recently paid \$31,000 for dinner with the Prime Minister, which was auctioned as part of the Canberra press gallery's annual charity ball. It is sending 3 same-sex couples to the dinner date to lobby the PM to change her opposition to gay marriage. Ms Gillard said she was looking forward to the meal but wouldn't change her mind. (Courier Mail 27/28 August 2011)

(Queensland MP) Bob Katter's half-brother has outed himself as gay on national television, to hit out at the outspoken independent MP for deriding homosexuals. Carl Katter, who bears a striking resemblance to his famous but largely estranged sibling, last night told the Ten Network's George Negus that he couldn't "just sit back" and allow Mr Katter to denigrate gay people and the campaign for same-sex marriage. "It's hurtful, it's dangerous, it's damaging and it's really inappropriate," Carl Katter said when asked about Mr Katter's claims to a rally last week that gay marriage was laughable. (The Australian, August 24, 2011)

Digital Media

The Federal Parliament has put aside time this month for MPs to speak for five minutes on the issues surrounding same-sex marriage. The move comes after Parliament passed a motion last November put forward by Greens MP Adam Bandt which called on MPs to speak with the people of their electorates about their feelings towards gay marriage. It was subsequently agreed that members should report back to the house with their finding in mid August. (<http://qnews.com.au>)

From Our Meeting

At the recent PFLAG meeting psychologist Paul Martin from the Centre for Human Potential discussed the topic of internalised homophobia.

Homophobia can be defined as a deeply held belief that homosexuality is deeply and inherently wrong, against nature and disordered.

For some parents of gay children this can be a challenging issue.

We are socially conditioned both subtly and overtly from a very young age to believe the dream of a fulfilling future with a partner of the opposite sex. This is mostly modelled by our traditional family structures, our immersion in the environmental print around us: posters, advertising billboards, magazines etc. and most forms of media. Our expectations may not be consciously clear to us, but the consequence of this is a very quiet development of the idea that homosexuality is not quite right - it doesn't fit the 'norm'. It's a belief that is embedded in us at a deep level and reinforced in our society everywhere we look.

So we are conditioned to believe that if relationships between men and women are the ideal, then gay and lesbian relationships must be something less.

Sadly this has a powerfully destructive impact on the lives of gay and lesbian individuals. For example, male same sex relationships are often stereotyped as being short term and second rate.

Stereotypes about gays and lesbians are as strong today as they've ever been, causing people to be misunderstood and rejected by their peers, work colleagues and families.

There are so many myths and stereotypes about being gay or lesbian that for some people it is hard to see others as an individual, rather than a label.

When your child comes out as LGBTI it can be challenging on many levels. Somehow it's different when it's your own child and not someone else's. Your own beliefs and your family values can be challenged at a very grass roots level.

So what can you do if you find yourself in the situation of feeling homophobic yourself?

Firstly accept that it exists and don't give yourself a hard time about it. It is very rare for someone in our society not to have deeply held negative beliefs about homosexuality. So naturally, even when you think you've come a

long way with accepting your son or daughter's sexuality and their partner, your homophobic beliefs will pop up inside of you when you least expect it.

This can come in the form of feeling scared that they will inevitably end up living a life of sexual depravity, will have endless short term relation-

ships with abusive partners and end up lonely and old.

You might feel a level of disgust and repulsion when imagining them having sex. You could suddenly get angry with them for no apparent reason when they are talking about something that is about their life as it is connected to their sexual orientation.

You might want to protect them from having a relationship as you might feel deep down that no matter who their partner is, they won't be good for them.

You might believe that 2 guys or women can't have a good long term committed relationship, or you might get upset when your son or daughter is talking about having a child. You could believe that this is pushing the limits way too far and involving innocent kids in a life which is filled with disorder and discrimination.

Because you are human you will think all sorts of things that are both rational and irrational, some based on objective truth and other times from gut level anger and fear. So do you just push your homophobia down, ignore it and hope it goes away?

When your child comes out as LGBTI it can be challenging on many levels. Somehow it's different when it's your own child and not someone else's. Your own beliefs and your family values can be challenged at a very grass roots level.

This is a strategy most people use but it doesn't work! The reason is that it can affect you emotionally, and like anything, if you push it away it still exists and can leak out and affect your feelings and behaviour.

The other problem with pushing these thoughts and feelings away is that you can end up causing an internal battle inside yourself which is exhausting and bad for your sense of emotional wellbeing.

The one side can be thinking that you should be caring, accepting, rational and supportive. The homophobic part of you can be saying that you should be protecting them from pain, distress and other gay or lesbian people who could hurt them.

A Useful Strategy

The trick here is to observe and accept the fact that the homophobic part of you has been triggered.

Rather than getting angry or upset with yourself about this part of you, accept that it is there, and remember that it is very natural that it is there given our upbringing.

Recognise that if you allow yourself to feel, act and think from this particular position that you could end up doing some damage.

So when talking to your son or daughter, ask yourself: if I react from this homophobic part of me, where will it get me and my relationship with my son or daughter?"

You can then connect with the more caring, unconditionally loving parent side of you and think, feel and behave from this part of you.

This may take some time to develop so it is important to be gentle with yourself if you don't always manage to get it right.

The other thing to do is to become aware of the thoughts you have when you are responding from the homophobic side. Make sure you are open to observing every thought and feeling you have and write it down in a journal which is kept private. Write down every irrational thought and feeling as unpleasant and difficult as it may feel. Then later, come back to the journal and ask questions of the statements you've written down using questions such as: "where is the evidence?" and "how logical is that?" Replace the irrational words with ones that make more sense and based in reality.

If you are still struggling, it may be beneficial for you or you and your son or daughter to speak with a psychologist who specialises in this area so you can have an objective third party working with you to overcome sometimes very intense emotional reactions to these issues. So keep observing and challenging this irrational part of yourself through talking, reading and your connection with PFLAG.

Once you've made progress on this issue, you'll be a wonderful model for those other parents who are still struggling.

Even when things appear to be hopeless, keep in mind that love is what binds families together through the medium of communication. If you persist, try not to give yourself a hard time and focus on the strategies above.



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Keeping Families Together

PFLAG believes that educating the community about sexual diversity makes people less judgemental

and removes the 'fear' factor about knowing someone who is LGBTI.

PFLAG is totally voluntary and organised by parents.

The motto of PFLAG Brisbane is '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.



Contact Us

Mail: PO Box 1372
Eagle Farm BC Qld 4009

Ph: 07 3017 1739

Mobile Helpline
0400 767 832

E: info@pflagbrisbane.org.au
W: www.pflagbrisbane.org.au

NEXT PFLAG MEETING

SATURDAY 24th September

Rev. MATT GLOVER- a

Senior Melbourne

Baptist Pastor joins us by

Teleconference 1.30 pm

30 HELEN ST NEWSTEAD

Rev Matt Glover is senior pastor of Lilydale Baptist Church and has been involved with the Gay community for the last fifteen years. He freelances as a cartoonist and illustrator, with his work appearing in books and magazines around the world. He is also a cycling tragic and can be often seen riding through the Dandenongs in brightly coloured lycra. Matt lives with his wife Katrina and has 2 children. He has written a thesis on "A Pastoral Response to Homosexuality in the Church".

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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.

Phone: 3211 1117

Email: info@centreforhumanpotential.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.

PFLAG believes that it is important that mainstream society understands the negative effects homophobic beliefs and outdated attitudes have on the general community in general.

Our message is delivered through local, state and national radio and television interviews, articles and advertisements in the print media, and by speaking to a range of community groups including school and parent on topics relevant to the difficulties of being lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender, and by lobbying political groups and advocating for change.

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

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Pay Online: www.pflagbrisbane.org.au

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BSB - 124-001

Account No - 2023-8607

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