



Next Meeting

PFLAG Brisbane's next meeting will be on **27th of October, 2007**. Our guest speaker will be discussing sexual health. We look forward to seeing you there.

Date: 27th October 2007

Time: 1.30pm

Place: 30 Helen Street, Newstead

Last meeting

Our guest speaker last meeting was psychologist Paul Martin. For those who are wondering where they know the name, Paul also presented at our National Conference in June.

The meeting was quite large and everyone had questions. Paul primarily covered the issues of 'trying to come out with a religious background', 'parent's emotions' and 'the struggles of being the one who is disclosing to friends and family'.

It was most fortunate for those who are at the early stages of acceptance to have the opportunity to speak to someone like Paul to get an understanding of what their loved one is dealing with, regarding their fears and concerns about "coming out".

Shelley would highly recommend Paul for anyone who is questioning or struggling with sexuality issues, suffering religious guilt, parents with concerns or any other issue regarding sexual orientation.

Out & Proud

One of the phrases Shelley often hears, is: "Why should we say FRED is gay or FRIEDA is lesbian? We don't say what we do in bed; so why should say what they do in bed?".

Another common statement is "We don't go around saying we're heterosexual; so why should we go around saying they're gay or lesbian?"

Neither of these sentences is saying what our lesbian daughters or gay sons do in bed. We tell people we are heterosexual all of the time - we get engaged, married, have photos of partner and children on the work desk. Wedding rings are another official sign that we are heterosexual. We talk freely about past relationships (failed or successful) all of these actions tell the listener we are heterosexual.

Once we have come to terms with our son or daughter being gay or lesbian and people ask if they have a boyfriend or girlfriend, Shelley believes honesty is the best policy.

While she agrees that you don't have to put up signs on the community noticeboard, one must ask - are you just going to keep saying "no they don't have a girl/boyfriend" for the rest of time?

Another reason for honesty is that you can freely and honestly talk about your son/daughter's life and what they are doing. Most parents feel it's a huge weight taken off their shoulders. Shelley's personal theory is if you lose friends because they can't accept your child just because they are gay or lesbian, so be it, they were never your friend to begin with.

Your child is so much more important.

- Shelley Argent

Convener, PFLAG Brisbane

Townsville Trip

Shelley was given the opportunity to go to Townsville for a few days, for "No Name Calling Week", where she

spoke to educators about the issues of bullying and what they can do as individuals to minimise bullying in school grounds.

Shelley also spoke about the fears and concerns that young people have when they recognise in themselves that they are LGBT, and had a chance to speak with community workers about what PFLAG is doing regarding lobbying government, the services and resources we provide and about starting a PFLAG group in Townsville.

There are a few gay-friendly venues, but none that are gay-specific. And, typical of regional areas, there are few support groups to assist young people with the difficulties of self acceptance. However, the lesbian and gay workers Shelley met were wonderful and are working hard to make changes. With time and education, things will change.

Cairns Pride Fair Day

As many would know, I always love going to Cairns; it's where my son and his partner live. But, as luck would have it, my son had to fly to Sydney and his partner to Melbourne the day I arrived! My son flew back late the next day. So, their friends adopted me - cooking me dinner and keeping me entertained. Thank you Paul, David, John, Colin and Ross for your kindness!

Cairns Pride Fair was similar to Brisbane - just smaller but just as much fun was had by everyone. I was also asked to be a guest speaker at the official opening which was quite emotional for me. I felt I was so welcomed and accepted.

I also received an award which was a real honour for the work I do spreading the word that 'to be gay is OK' in regional areas. While I accepted this with pride it was also quite humbling because there is still so much work to be done in regional areas.

PFLAG resources were made available on the QAHC Cairns table and I also took the opportunity to stay and talk to those who came looking for assistance or information.

- *Shelley Argent*
Convener, PFLAG Brisbane

Radio

Whenever Shelley is away, she will always endeavor to head to the local ABC radio office to talk about PFLAG, the support we offer, and the gay issues that are prominent at the time.

At ABC in Cairns, Shelley discussed the issues of adoption. In Townsville, Shelley discussed parent's issues and PFLAG. Most recently at home in Brisbane, Shelley was on the radio discussing the HREOC (Human Rights & Equal Opportunities Commission) report and the Federal Government's reluctance to change the 58 pieces of legislation that discriminate against our sons and daughters.

Become a "Squeaky Wheel"

I keep hearing from politicians that if we want change we need to be literally speaking out about the discrimination our sons and daughters experience. I am constantly told that until the general population begin to make rumblings nothing will happen. It's the "squeaky wheel" syndrome.

We can't just sit back and say "it isn't fair", we have to be vocal to initiate change. I often think about Rosa Parks the black woman on the bus in the USA who refused to give up her seat on the bus to a white man and the "kerfuffle" that caused. This historical incident was one of the catalysts to the civil rights movement. We could all be a "Rosa" we don't need special qualifications.

Some parents believe that there are enough gay rights groups and that PFLAG should not get involved the issue of gay rights. I wish this was true, but I have noticed that I am listened to more than the LGBT people who are with me, which isn't right.

I don't know more than those I'm with and I don't have to live with the injustices. So please know your voice as a parent carries more impact than your LGBT son or daughter regarding their rights. We can, and should, work for change for them.

Please write, visit or call your federal politicians, get on to talkback radio when possible and write to the papers. The first time is always the hardest.

- *Shelley Argent*
Convener, PFLAG Brisbane

PFLAG Family Advertisement

The second advert has now been shown in the Australian newspaper and many thanks to those who donated.

Many families donated in both advertisements which show that many living in the gay community do take the need for economic rights seriously and are happy to stand up and be counted.

We can just hope that people take notice and contact their federal members and those in opposition stating the need for gay rights.

Website update

During the month of August, our website received over 1,100 unique visitors - with the 14th of August being the busiest day overall.

Shelley's publication "Sexuality is Not a Choice" was downloaded 1,037 times in August, the June newsletter 142 times in August, July's newsletter had 44 downloads in August, and August's newsletter was downloaded 42 times.

Audio-recordings of speeches from our recent National Conference were again popular this month... with most being downloaded around 20 times each. Since posting after the conference, each speech has been downloaded more than 60 times (with Ross Daniel's speech being the most popular).

Website visitors came from (in order of popularity): Australia, the USA, Ireland, China and then Malaysia.

You can visit our website to browse documents, listen to speeches, download eBooks & make a donation securely online via credit card, at www.pflagbrisbane.org.au

Adoption rights in Queensland

A couple of weeks ago, Molly (a mother-to-be, pregnant with twins), Rod Goodbun (a former President of the Queensland AIDS Council) and Shelley went to see Kate Mellich (the Adviser to Kerry Shine, the Attorney General of Queensland) about what is termed "known" adoption.

This means the ability to adopt your partner's child / children. For same sex couples this is a very important issue with 20% lesbians and 6% gay males being main carers of their own children.

The issues are too vast to put into a newsletter but we discovered a few days after the meeting that the Attorneys General had all met a few days prior to our meeting with Kate and removed adoption from their agenda.

So in a nutshell this inaction continues to leave our grandchildren in an unstable environment should the biological parent become incapacitated or deceased leaving the non biological parent with no rights over the child / children.

Presently, Tasmania, Western Australia and the ACT do allow adoption of children in same sex relationships and Victoria is in the discussion stage.

HREOC & Economic Discrimination

Rod Goodbun and Shelley recently met with Chris Leggitt (a Treasury Adviser to Peter Dutton; Peter Costello's Adviser) to discuss the costs of the implementation of HREOC's recommendations.

When lobbying, we keep hearing about the financial cost to society but we keep pointing out that the gay community pay their taxes, contribute to society but realistically gets very little in return.

Furthermore, we quickly make it clear human rights, regardless of cost; is not an excuse to continue withholding economic rights. Especially when the country is supposedly so prosperous, this can hardly be considered an argument.

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The PFLAG Brisbane newsletter is designed & compiled by Andy Pudmenzky of Big Budda Boom

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PFLAG is totally voluntary & organised by parents.
Please support us. You can assist by advertising here.
For more information, please contact Shelley Argent.



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Please complete the form below and return to PFLAG. You can also pay online, via www.pflagbrisbane.org.au. Larger donations are always welcome. Thanks for your support!

Name: _____

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Membership type:

Family (\$25 annually - I have included a cheque or Australia Post Money Order)

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Thank you!