



Shelley's Welcome

As usual the year is flying by, but we are still busy finishing off projects, supporting parents and lobbying government about equality issues.

Although we had no new parents attend, our last meeting was still quite large. It is great to see the parents who attended all moving forward towards acceptance and starting to consider what to say to those who ask about boyfriends and girlfriends, how to reply to homophobic comments and to generally start to feel comfortable with the issue of having a gay son or lesbian daughter.

Also a very big thank you to Katie Allen who came along from the Lesbian Health Alliance and discussed health issues in general for both lesbians and gays. Katie gave a great presentation on how far we have come in Queensland. Health today is still an issue of concern for many LGBT who feel they don't have access to gay friendly health care. Many lesbians and gays are still reluctant to disclose their sexual orientation for fear of being judged or not treated with respect.

This can be a huge issue for those who suffer depression. They may be depressed because they are gay or lesbian and hesitant to tell and so the doctors, in their ignorance, cannot treat the person properly because of the patient's fear or internalised homophobia, or fear of confidentiality issues.

Katie also pointed out that for many doctors, even though they may be trying to be helpful, they unwittingly provide misinformation about a range health issues. So Katie and a small troop of volunteers are working hard to get the correct information out into the community.

If your son or daughter is seeking gay friendly health practitioners but is unsure where they can be accessed,

contact your local AIDS Council or here in Queensland contact the Queensland Association for Healthy Communities on (07) 30171777.

- Shelley Argent
Convener, PFLAG Brisbane

Next Meeting / Annual General Meeting

The next meeting, to be held on **Saturday 28th November**, will be our last for the year and it will also be our annual general meeting (AGM).

If you are interested in becoming our Treasurer, please put your hand up. Maxine has decided it's time she put away her calculator and Shelley has decided that it is time to share the load - so we are looking for a new President as well.

PFLAG Brisbane is becoming too large for one person to organize and we feel that we need a President who can concentrate on peer support while the other "load-sharer" can continue to lobby. We have come too far now to let the lobbying slide.

Shelley would like to retain the position of National Spokesperson because she is quite passionate about the rights of our sons and daughters and see's the support of the parent group PFLAG as having a favourable impact on the issue of rights.

Our AGM will be held from 1.30pm at the usual premises; 30 Helen Street, Newstead.

Become an Equal Rights Ally

This is our final project for the year and is directed at the "straight community" to create awareness of how to be more inclusive and sensitive towards those in the lesbian and gay community.

The plan is to run a nationwide postcard campaign which will incorporate quick tips and website addresses within the design to enable readers to access a range of tips to improve their general knowledge and to help remove many of the myths that exist today.

We hope that this project will be completed by mid November.

“The great bake-off” - Sportsman's hotel Annual Fundraiser

Many thanks to Paul, Neil and Ross for their efforts once again this year. PFLAG and Open Doors each received \$14,500 from this event. We are always extremely grateful to the guys and girls at “Sporties” and to everyone who contributed the most amazing cakes and to those who bought them.

The funds from this event will go towards making the “Equal Rights Ally” project a reality.

Keeping Families United

Our resident psychologist Paul Martin has received calls from a few interested families for his “Keeping Families United” series of workshops. The cost is \$45 per person or \$60 per couple for the six sessions. Psychologists are now part of the Medicare Rebate System and we believe you just need a referral from your GP to access the benefit at a more affordable cost.

This is a prime opportunity for parents struggling to understand what is happening with their son or daughter, which will ultimately keep the family unit strong. For more information please call the Centre for Human Potential on (07) 3211 1117.

Conscience Vote on Same Sex Parenting and Surrogacy

Many of you may have read that Queensland Premier Anna Bligh is giving MPs the option to have a Conscience Vote regarding same sex parenting issues and surrogacy. As we have said before, this legislation is only playing “catch up” with the majority of other states in Australia.

PFLAG Brisbane has been very involved in talking and writing letters to all MPs throughout Queensland, impressing upon them that we, as parents of lesbians and gays and as grandparents to their children, want them, as a family unit, to have the same emotional and financial stability as the children of our heterosexual sons and daughters.

But we can't do this on our own, we need your help!

Please write a letter to the MP in your area outlining your concerns as a parent and simply telling them how you feel about some of the issues below and how they affect you and your child...

- ★ The need for equality for your lesbian daughter or gay son regarding parenting rights. If this legislation is introduced it will remove next of kin issues.
- ★ Presently the non-biological parent cannot legally take their child to the doctor when sick and receive information (we know of a woman who took her partners' child for a vaccination, with a letter of consent from the natural mother but the child was refused).
- ★ Presently the non-biological parent cannot access educational information.
- ★ Changes to present legislation will remove confusion between State and Federal law (presently, if the couple should break up, the non-biological parent can be made to pay child maintenance. Here in Queensland the child can be removed from the same person who pays the maintenance).
- ★ Same sex couples value their children as much as their heterosexual siblings.
- ★ The need for a child is a basic human instinct with the desire to provide and accept love.

Your letter will need to include your name and address, to ensure that you are recognised as a constituent in your MPs area and to receive a personal reply.

Could you please also forward a copy of your letter to PFLAG at pflagbris@bigpond.com and advise if you are happy for us to forward your letter on to other MPs throughout Queensland minus your address. We thank you for your assistance.

Marriage Equality

Some of you may have seen the television campaign we are running on Channel 7. We believe it is important to bring this issue to the attention of the general community. The timing of this advertising is also important due to the Senate Inquiry that is in the progress with the decision to be handed down at the end of November.

We believe it is time the government is made aware that parents and family members are standing beside their sons and daughters in regard to this issue. While your son or daughter may not wish to marry, it comes down to being able to make a choice. Our sons and daughters should be able to make that choice, with the right to be treated equally by the government, regardless of their orientation.

Marriage is about building a life together, it's about commitment and the community valuing the relationship. It also makes life easier when it comes to legal, health and next of kin issues. Research shows people who marry are healthier, happier and generally

wealthier if married. Funds are coming from private donations, not general PFLAG funds. If you would like to make a donation please contact Shelley on 0409 363 335 or email pflagbris@bigpond.com. Thank you.



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 could be of real benefit to you and your family, or simply call and book a time with one of us.

If you are not familiar with how to access the Medicare rebate, one of our receptionists would be more than happy to speak to you about this.

Phone 3211 1117 or you can email us on info@centreforhumanpotential.com.au



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pflag

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PFLAG is totally voluntary & organised by parents.
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For more information, please contact Shelley Argent.

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Contact Shelley on 3017 1739