



Welcome

Welcome to the July/August newsletter and a big thank you to our regional members who are happy to be the PFLAG regional contacts. Won't it be wonderful when the day comes that there is no need for PFLAG and families and society see sexual diversity as a non issue and our LGBT children have the same rights and recognition as their heterosexual siblings. But until that day comes please remember if you don't need PFLAG anymore, PFLAG needs you. Perhaps you have ideas to promote PFLAG, projects you would like to initiate, be part of the committee, or just be a support to new parents. If you would like to be more active with PFLAG please contact Lyn, Grainne or myself on (07) 3017 1739. - Shelley

Next Meeting

Our next meeting is on the 13th of August, 1:30pm at 187 Melbourne Street, West End (cnr. Edmonstone & Melbourne Streets). Parking and entrance located at rear of building (off Edmonstone Street). Brett Mooney will be our guest speaker.

Spain legalises gay marriage

From correspondents in Madrid / 30-06-2005
Agence France-Presse

SPANISH deputies have approved a controversial law allowing gay couples to marry and adopt children, a move that has deeply divided this predominantly Roman Catholic country.

Spain, which has around four million homosexuals according to gay associations, thus becomes Europe's third nation to legalise same-sex marriage after the Netherlands and Belgium, and the fourth in the world after Canada, which passed its law on Tuesday. Deputies approved the text by a majority of 187 votes out of 350, with 147 voting against. The Bill proposed by the Socialist Government of Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero, gives gay unions the same adoption rights as heterosexuals.

Continued on page 6...

A Life of Unlearning

Gold Coast PFLAG convener Roger Fedyk reviews 'A Life of Unlearning' after meeting author Anthony Venn Brown, in Brisbane recently.

Just recently I had the pleasure of meeting Anthony Venn Brown in Brisbane. Tony was a keynote speaker at a conference I attended and had mentioned his book *A Life of Unlearning*. Being impressed with his presentation, I purchased his book and briefly spoke with him. Having read it, I was moved to write this review.

By way of disclosure, I am closely involved in gay issues as the father of a gay son. I act as the Gold Coast Convener for PFLAG, Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays, a family support group. Anthony Venn Brown is gay but his 'coming out' is a remarkable human interest story.

I found his book to be alternately heroic, foolish and overwhelmingly revealing. There is scarcely a page that does not engage you personally. Some will find Tony's story disturbing and confrontational on many fronts and others will find it liberating and an example of the triumph of the individual human spirit.

Tony does not portray himself as a hero but the book does have heroes, in particular his former wife Helen, who leaps out of the pages as a truly remarkable woman. It would be an honour to be her friend.

Anthony Venn Brown grew up in Sydney as the darling youngest child within a staid and morally upstanding Anglican family. He took some advantage, as a child, of his favoured status as is the wont of precocious children. He fumbled his way into his first sexual experience around the age of 13 with another boy.

That in itself is unremarkable as various data from psychological studies have shown. Many boys have their first sexual experiments with other boys. As he grew into his teens the attraction to other males became stronger and his urges led him into various unsafe practices. This was the mid-60s and AIDS was unknown.

Continued on page 3...

Coming out getting easier for gay teens

By Adele Horin

More young people are happy to be gay than six years ago, a major survey has found. And television programs such as *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy* have helped.

But the survey of 1750 people aged 14 to 21 who are attracted to the same sex revealed they still experienced high levels of verbal and physical abuse because of their sexuality. And schoolyards remained the major danger area.

The study, the largest of its kind in Australia, was carried out by the Australian Research Centre in Sex Health and Society at La Trobe University in Melbourne.

It shows young people are more likely to "come out", and to receive a positive response from friends and family than six years ago. And more than one-third of respondents realised their sexual difference before puberty.

The lead author, Dr Lynne Hillier, a senior research fellow, said there were "fantastic" improvements in the young people's self-image since a similar survey was conducted in 1998, reflecting significant cultural changes.

"The progress is also directly related to the extra supports available, such as social groups for same-sex-attracted young people run by councils and community health centres. And the media has helped. "Apart from *Queer Eye*, a Channel Seven soapie about lesbian life, *The L Word*, had also had a positive impact.

The report, *Writing Themselves In Again: 6 years on*, shows 76 per cent of the young people said they felt "great" or "good" about their sexuality, compared with 60 per cent in the earlier survey. And 95 per cent had told someone about their sexuality, against 82 per cent in the first survey.

"More young people are telling someone and getting a positive response," Dr Hillier said. "But parents are only told if their child believes there is a good chance of them being supportive."

Parents were generally more positive than in the past, though mothers more so than fathers. And while a small proportion of the young people - less than 20 per cent - had told a teacher about their sexuality, the response was also usually positive.

However, the survey found homophobia was just as rife among peers as six years ago. Almost half those surveyed had experienced verbal or physical harassment, with 16 per cent having been physically abused. Usually the abuse happened at school and often was part of an ongoing campaign.

Dr Hillier called for a "zero tolerance" response to homophobic violence at school.

"It is especially concerning that the most dangerous place for these young people to be ... is their school," the report says. It cites the "typical" experiences of a boy called Wayne: "I was hit in the face and thrown down a flight of stairs and called a puffer and a queer weirdo. This was at high school in year eight," he said.

Bullying and harassment were directly associated with young gay people's drug use. Those who reported abuse were more likely to be taking drugs. "It's their way of escape," Dr Hillier said. While drug use among this population had declined since the first survey, it was still worryingly high, and higher than among other young people.

The study also found that the young people were sexually active at a younger age than their heterosexual peers, many of them with people of the opposite sex.

Source: *Sydney Morning Herald*, May 25, 2005

<http://www.smh.com.au/news/National/Coming-out-getting-easier-for-gay-teenagers/2005/05/24/1116700714246.html>

Richard Fidler - ABC 612

PFLAG, together with the GLWA Association, approached radio ABC 612 for more exposure on evening radio in June. I am amazed at how many people listen to evening radio. We were on for 45 minutes which I'm told in radio time is a very long period. We had several people call in and most were very positive. This was great exposure for us because it went over regional Queensland which was great for those in rural areas to hear other parents talk about their fears and concerns for their LGBT children. - *Shelley*

Gay and Lesbian Welfare Association

Shelley has been asked to give a talk to the associations' new telephone counsellors about the concerns and reactions parents have when their children "come out". This will occur towards the end of July.

Membership forms

Many thanks to those who paid their PFLAG membership this year. It really makes such a difference by providing us with funds to make other families aware that we are here and able to be supportive to both the young person coming out and to families who have concerns and are in need of assistance. Membership cost is \$25 per family or \$100 corporate membership. Newsletter circulation is approximately 200.

A Life of Unlearning

(continued from page 1)

Confiding his homosexual adventures, which were causing him personal anguish, to a trusted neighbour finally led him to admit his homosexuality to his mother. Putting him into therapy was her response and the circumstances were kept from his father. At the same time Tony was developing a deep and abiding interest in the Bible and a Christian life. He experimented with various mainstream religions much to his Anglican parents discomfort and finally found a place within Pentacostalism. Believing that he was called to ministry he managed to pay for tuition at a Bible college in New Zealand. Torn by his homosexual urges he took refuge in a platonic friendship with a young lady who was also going to attend the college. Believing that a life of faith would free him from his sexual demons he threw himself into his studies and was an able student with a budding gift for evangelism.

Returning to Australia after graduation, his life became punctuated by homosexual dalliances that filled him with remorse and loathing even while he built his career as a preacher. Finally admitting his situation to his church elders he went through a series of corrective experiences that are difficult to reconcile with any idea of a Christian fellowship. Exorcisms, physical beatings, deliberate public humiliation were some of the things that he endured because he felt that God was calling him. His confidence in his icuref from homosexuality by God's grace was unshakable and he exhibited steely determination to see everything through even to the point of undergoing a 40 day fast that would emulate Jesus.

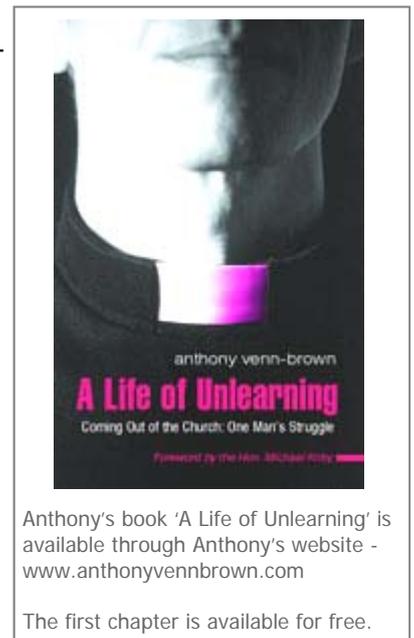
It seemed therefore that God finally had answered his prayers when he met and fell deeply in love with his future wife, Helen. Marrying in some haste, he was thankful that he could love his wife and consummate their union. Two beautiful daughters were born and with the unstinting support of his wife and the blessing of the Assemblies of God church he became an itinerant preacher.

Their life of faith showed a remarkable reliance on God's providence and miraculous and fortunate events ensured that they managed to pay bills and put food on the table. The just-in-time and just-enough miracles seemed to confirm that they were on the right path. However, eventually, the homosexual feelings returned. The cycle of guilt and loathing, prayer and confession started again. However, it had no deleterious effect on his ministry. In fact, Tony became a leading preacher in the Assemblies of God church. He travelled the world, preaching to thousands and he developed and gave seminars that were booked out many months in advance.

Finally after one life-changing homosexual experience in Brisbane, Tony had reached the end of the road for his double life. Of his own volition, he returned home and confessed everything to his wife and eventually to his church and its leaders. He was stripped of his licence to preach, he lost his income and finally his self-respect and dignity when he was made to stand in front of his own church congregation and confess his sin of adultery. The only thing that was spared him was that he did not have to confess his homosexuality though that news spread via gossip quickly enough. His marriage eventually collapsed though his wife heroically stood by him for as long as she could, in fact, for as long as he would allow her to.

The final chapters of the book deal with how his coming out affected his family and with his slow journey to rediscovering himself as a person of worth and dignity. It explores his quest for a meaningful love and a life partner. The only disappointment, albeit a minor one, was the absence of an in-depth examination of the dichotomy between Christianity's view of homosexuality and his life experience.

Continued on page 4...



Survey Forms

Thank you to those who took the time to return the surveys. They were very positive and encouraging - which is great! If you would still like to make comments please feel free to write in your thoughts or if you would like another survey please email or call the office (please see back page for contact details).

Same-Sex Recognition

Congratulations to Spain and Canada for recognising same sex marriages along with Belgium and the Netherlands. Many other countries recognise same sex relationships with Civil Unions - like New Zealand.

Unfortunately this progressive step won't be happening here for quite a while. Australian LGBT rights groups argue that federally there are no rights for same sex couples in this country.

Here, LGBT couples lack entitlements to superannuation, pensions, taxation, social security benefits and employment entitlements which are under the control of the federal government. Thank goodness for our States recognising the rights of individuals! For further information, please see the article on page 1 - "*Spain legalises gay marriage*".

PFLAG is branching out!

PFLAG is expanding, and we are presently in the process of getting regional contacts which will make it much easier for parents in these areas to talk with others who are comfortable with their children's diverse sexuality.

The plan is to provide them with resources and keep regular contact which we hope will spread the word about PFLAG and hasten understanding regarding sexual orientation.

Guest Speaker

As many would be aware, our guest speaker for our June meeting, Brett Mooney, was unable to make the meeting due to a sudden illness.

Brett has specifically asked if he can speak at the August meeting.

As an employee of the Qld. AIDS Council, Brett will talk to us about being gay, his indigenous culture and the problems he faces while trying to fit into the white culture. We look forward to seeing you at the meeting!

PFLAG Advertising

Great news!! We have enough funding to advertise every fortnight in the Courier Mail until December.

The aim is to get the PFLAG name out there which will assist parents to more-easily access information regarding sexual orientation.

We've also had a colour advert in QNews - a popular local gay paper that was received very well by the gay community.

A Life of Unlearning

(continued from page 3)

Tony deals only superficially with reconciling his life as a gay man with the Christianity that he knows intimately. This perhaps is not surprising as the book primarily and graphically grapples with the personal drama and responses of all the participants. The Assemblies of God church does not come out of this book kindly but it would be unfair to make any overt criticism of AOG as the same type of reaction would undoubtedly come from other churches.

This is not a book for the squeamish or prudish, nothing is held back. However, for those who want to understand human frailty, courage and personal redemption within the context of being a gay man it is an invaluable resource. I highly recommend it.

For further information you can visit Tony's web site www.anthonnyvennbrown.com. Copies of the book may be ordered through the website. The first chapter is available for free download. The book publishers are New Holland.

Roger's review was published in Margo Kingston's web diary, on the Sydney Morning Herald website. Margo's web log (blog) includes a comments section which is open to everyone who wishes to make a comment via the internet. The range of existing comments is very interesting.

Please visit: http://webdiary.smh.com.au/archives/margo_kingston/001249.html
Anthony's website: www.anthonnyvennbrown.com

Regional PFLAG contacts

The following contacts offer advice and support in & around regional areas of Queensland...

Gold Coast (Roger and Susy) - ph. 5525 2924

Sunshine Coast (Tania) - ph. 0412 132289

Rockhampton (Neville & Rosemary) - ph. 4928 7275

Sarina (Patricia) ph. 4956 2509

Babinda (Pam) - ph. 4067 1634

Toowoomba (Shane) - ph. 4659 9961

Gympie (Ricki) - ph. 5484 3221



Equality & Age of Consent

In Queensland, the age of consent is 16 years for heterosexual sex for males and females, but 18 years for male homosexual sex.

Legal age of consent for gay males varies from State to State. For lesbians, it's my understanding that there is no real age of consent. So how is that for inconsistencies?

- Research shows that gay youth is not exposed to added exploitation
- This should be seen as an issue of equality
- Removes the hesitation of accessing safe sex information from experts because some 16 year old gay youth are having sex
- Eliminates fear of accessing treatment of untreated sexually transmitted infections

Typically the federal government needs to get its act together with gay rights and make the many varying laws including "age of consent" between the States and make them all uniform to eliminate confusion.

Please support following Queensland Government e-Petition: *"Reform of the Queensland Criminal Code to allow equal protection and support of all youth, regardless of their sexuality or of their gender"...*

Website link: <http://tinyurl.com/5yutk>

- Shelley

Events - Pride Fair

What a great day Pride Fair turned out to be again. Everyone gathered in King George Square surrounded by balloons and banners. John Frame was the main speaker who discussed equality regarding "age of consent".



As usual when the procession started we were led by the Dykes on Bikes who are always noisy but good value. The parade seemed longer this year which was great. Additionally, several people made the comment that the fair at Musgrave Park was much larger than usual, which is great for Brisbane. I am sure there are many reasons why this was the case, but one would have had to of been that more people are feeling comfortable with their sexuality and not afraid to be out and proud.

As usual we had a good turn out of parents marching and being a presence on our stall. I always feel excited about how far PFLAG and the parents have come in the last few years.



The first time I marched for PFLAG it was just my son holding one pole with his dog on a leash and myself holding the other pole showing the PFLAG banner. We had no resources or information to hand out. Brisbane parents have come a long way in a few years. Congratulations to those who marched and generally came along to be part of this great day. A big thank you to Kieran and Lyn Walsh who organised the stall and stayed to the very end to show support for the LGBT community!

Spain legalises gay marriage

(continued from page 1)

The Bill will become law in around a month's time. "We are not the first country to adopt such a law and I am sure we will not be the last," Mr Zapatero said.

"It is true that (homosexuals) are only a minority, but their triumph is a triumph for everybody, their victory makes us all better, makes our society better."

The legislation was bitterly opposed by conservatives in the influential Roman Catholic Church and the right-wing Opposition Popular Party. An estimated half a million people, including many bishops, priests and nuns, demonstrated against the new law in central Madrid last weekend, while almost as many attended a rally the gay community billed as a counter-protest.

Saturday's event was organised by the Forum for the Family, Spain's association of pro-Catholic pressure groups, which yesterday handed in a petition with 600,000 signatures against the Bill on the eve of its examination in Parliament. Anti-gay marriage groups had already previously collected half a million signatures opposing the Bill when it was approved on its first reading in April.

However, polls have showed around three-quarters of the electorate supported the Government's liberal agenda, and most Spaniards, even if they described themselves as Catholics, saw the church as out of touch with popular feeling.

The law will be among the most liberal in Europe, and includes another Socialist proposal to liberalise divorce laws.

The right for gay couples to marry and enjoy equal treatment over adoption was a key demands in Gay Pride marches in European capitals this month.

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Big Budda Boom

The PFLAG Brisbane newsletter is
designed & edited by Andy Pudmenzky
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