



## Welcome

Here we are folks - well in to the second half of the year and only two more meetings to go for the year. I can't believe its only a few months to Christmas. I think that's really scary!

However, our August meeting was very large, with several new faces, their stories were very different and each with their own personal struggles. I hope they felt they were listened to and accepted into the group and felt some comfort by attending.

I think when anyone attends a PFLAG meeting for the first time it's always a little stressful and people are unsure about what to expect. However, our aim is to keep meetings informal, with lots of chatter and coffee. The intention is to make people feel comfortable and always welcome.

Brett an indigenous male who works at Qld. AIDS Council, was our guest speaker. He talked about his struggle with coming to terms with his sexual orientation while trying to retain his traditional culture and then the need to find his place in white society. His talk was thought-provoking making us very aware of the difficulties society places on anyone with a diverse sexual orientation. And, some more than others.

- Shelley

## Next Meeting

Our next meeting is on Saturday the 8th of October, 1:30pm at 187 Melbourne Street, West End (cnr. Edmonstone & Melbourne Streets). Parking and entrance located at rear of building (off Edmonstone Street). Parking is also available in the Melbourne Hotel car park and walk down to the meeting.

Also, please note that our last meeting for the year will be on Saturday 3rd December.

## Incorporation

Brisbane PFLAG has come a long way in the last 6 years. We are in the early stages of becoming official!

The committee felt it was time to become recognised officially. For some things it can cause extra work, but long term we believe it is in the best interest of the group.

Western Sydney, Victoria and Perth have already made the step. Let's hope in the next few years there will be a federation of all States making us a force to be reckoned with.

We also greatly appreciate the Caxton Street Legal Service for guiding us through the process.

## Incorporation Meeting

A special meeting will be held at 12.30pm on the 8th of October (before our usual meeting) regarding *incorporation* and we are requesting that **all financial members attend**.

As this is a lunch meeting, please bring some lunch to share if you like. We look forward to seeing all financial members at this special meeting. Thank you.

## Ethnic Communities Council of Queensland

We are in the very early stages of talks with the Ethnic Communities Council about a project for those in the non English speaking community regarding understanding of sexual orientation and safe sex issues.

Maggie, a PFLAG mum, is particularly interested in being part of this project so we'll keep you informed about how we progress.

For more information, please contact PFLAG Brisbane on (07) 3017 1739 or visit [www.pflagbrisbane.org.au](http://www.pflagbrisbane.org.au).

## Thank you!

Many thanks to a parent who recently gave PFLAG a large private donation. I think it's always nice when large donations are given that they go to a particular project, not just go into the coffers.

It was decided this money would be spent most effectively by printing enough brochures to send to all police stations and state high schools around Queensland.

This again will assist people who may want to access our service for assistance or referrals. Thank you for your donation - and thanks to everyone else who has also helped out by making a donation to PFLAG Brisbane.

## Gay Resort has Family Week

I have received an invitation to go to *Turtle Cove*, which is predominantly a gay resort, mid-November to for a week to give some workshops regarding "coming out" issues and family responses.

The intention is for the guests to bring family members which we hope will hasten understanding and acceptance of their loved ones who are LGBT. For more information about Turtle Cove, please visit [www.turtlecove.com](http://www.turtlecove.com).

Since I am going this far north, I thought I might as well go a little earlier and promote PFLAG and its services. While up there, I will just generally 'spread the word' like the team did when we drove out to Charleville. - *Shelley*

## Catholic Leader and the ADCQ

As a group we lodged a formal complaint about an article written in (the February 22nd edition of) the Catholic Leader, by Susan Champness. We believe it was insulting to us as parents but more insulting to our LGBT children.

The Anti Discrimination Commission of Queensland has accepted our complaint and there is to be mediation in early October.

In brief, the article stated that lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT) persons came from dysfunctional families, they themselves had no morals and they were

basically deviants. And, of course, that their sexual orientation was by "choice".

So watch this space. We don't expect that the church will alter its stance on homosexuality, but the Catholic Leader should be made very aware of the impact articles such as these have on LGBT's and their families. One can only say that the article contained extremely biased and uninformed opinion.

## Red Cross ban on Gay Blood challenged

*A media release from the Tasmanian Gay & Lesbian Rights Group - Tuesday 2nd August, 2005*

The Red Cross ban on sexually-active gay and bisexual men giving blood may be struck down thanks to legal action taken by a young Launceston gay man, Michael Cain. Cain today lodged two separate legal challenges to the ban, claiming it is discriminatory, unnecessary and may cost lives.

"Last year when the Red Cross in Launceston told me I couldn't give blood because I'm gay I felt angry that they didn't care that my sexual activity is always safe", Mr Cain said.

"I also felt dirty because in their eyes gay equals diseased. Most of all I was also concerned for those people whose lives might have been saved by my blood."

Cain has challenged the Red Cross ban on the basis that it contravenes the Tasmanian Anti-discrimination Act. He has also lodged a case with the national Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission arguing that the Commonwealth Therapeutic Goods Administration has failed to adhere to Australia's international obligations by allowing the Red Cross to continue its discriminatory policy.

Tasmanian Gay and Lesbian Rights Group spokesperson, Rodney Croome, condemned the Red Cross policy as window dressing.

"Twenty years ago the ban may have made people feel more confident about the blood supply..."

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"...but today the reality is that all blood is tested and the ban is not needed", Mr Croome said.

"Gay and bisexual men can be organ donors and sperm donors, so why not blood donors?"

Mr Cain's cases have been prepared with advice from the Hobart Community Legal Service, and according to Mr Croome, have a good chance of success.

"According to Australian Government law the Red Cross is governed by blood donation guidelines set by the Council of Europe, and nowhere in these guidelines does it stipulate that gay and bisexual men should be banned from blood donation."

"Clearly the Red Cross has exceeded its mandate in a highly discriminatory way."

### **Online Resources**

For Michael Cain's personal perspective on the gay blood ban go to <http://tinyurl.com/85xfa>

For answers to common questions about the gay blood ban go to <http://tinyurl.com/b84hu>

For an in-depth analysis of the gay blood ban & details of Michael's case go to <http://tinyurl.com/dtm6x>

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## **Gay Blood Ban - Questions & Answers**

### **1. What is the current Red Cross blood donation policy?**

The Red Cross asks all potential donors if they have had male to male sex or sexual activity with a male who might be bisexual within the last twelve months.

A positive answer to either question bars the potential donor from giving blood. The effect is that sexually active gay and bisexual men cannot donate blood in Australia.

### **2. What is wrong with this policy?**

The effective ban on gay and bisexual men giving blood is wrong for three reasons.

It robs the Australian public of a significant pool of potential blood donors at a time when blood supplies are critically low.

Major surveys show that about 5% of the Australian population are gay or bisexual men. A 5% increase in blood donations at this critical time may save lives. The ban unnecessarily discriminates against gay and bisexual men and stigmatises them as a threat to public health.

It poses a particular problem for gay and bisexual men who are not open about their sexual orientation in workplaces or service clubs where en mass blood donation is encouraged.

The ban also sends out an incorrect and irresponsible public health message by suggesting that all gay sex is a health risk while virtually all heterosexual sex is safe.

### **3. Doesn't the ban on gay and bisexual men giving blood protect the blood supply?**

No. All donated blood is tested for HIV and other blood-borne diseases.

There is a window period during which time the presence of HIV in donated blood cannot be detected, but due to rapid advances in technology this has been reduced to less than a fortnight and has no impact on the production of most blood products.

Blood products that must be used within a fortnight of donation (eg platelets for people with haemophilia) are only taken from donors with a well-established relationship with the Red Cross.

The existence of a window period may make it necessary for potential blood donors to disclose their relevant medical and sexual history. However, we believe that male-to-male sex is not, in-and-of itself, relevant to HIV risk and should not be used as a basis for barring potential donors.

### **4. Isn't it a fact that in Australia gay and bisexual men are more likely to have HIV?**

Yes. But the overwhelming majority of men who have sex with men do not, and will never, have HIV or AIDS.

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This is because of a wide spread culture of safe sex. If safe sex is promoted by public health authorities as sufficient to save the lives of gay men, it should be considered by the Red Cross as sufficient to protect the blood supply.

Heterosexual men and women who have unsafe sex are more likely to have HIV/AIDS than most gay men. However, the Red Cross does not screen for them, or bar them from donation. The Red Cross's failure to bar at-risk heterosexuals has not jeopardised the blood supply.

#### **5. Are there other inconsistencies with the Red Cross blood donation policy?**

Yes. Sexually active gay and bisexual men can be organ donors and sperm donors.

#### **6. Are there any countries which allow gay and bisexual men to donate blood?**

Yes. Gay and bisexual men are not banned from donating blood in either Switzerland or Spain.

This has not placed the blood supply in those countries at risk. Last week the Prime Minister of Sweden, Goran Persson, said gay men should be able to donate blood.

#### **7. What legal action is being taken?**

Two cases have been lodged, one with the Tasmanian Anti-discrimination Commission and one with the Australian Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission.

The case to the Tasmanian Anti-discrimination Commission alleges that the Red Cross policy effectively banning gay and bisexual men from giving blood is discriminatory on the grounds of sexual orientation and lawful sexual activity.

It argues that the policy is not necessary to protect the blood supply from contamination. It also argues that the Red Cross is contravening its own principles as well as the guidelines set by the Council of Europe for blood donation, guidelines which Australian Federal legislation says apply to this country and which are overseen by a Federal Government agency called the Therapeutic Goods Administration.

The case to the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission alleges that the Therapeutic Goods Administration has contravened Australia's international human rights obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, in particular the right to equality and the right not to be discriminated against on the grounds of sexual orientation.

It has done this by failing to ensure that the Red Cross conforms to its own principles and to the guidelines set by the Council of Europe for blood donation.

#### **8. Who is the person taking the complaints?**

Michael Cain is a young gay man who lives in Launceston.

When he responded to a Red Cross call for blood donors in October 2004 he was not aware of the ban on sexually active gay and bisexual men giving blood.

He answered honestly to the male sex question on the donor form and was deeply upset that he was refused the opportunity to donate on the basis of that answer.

Michael was then in a monogamous same-sex relationship, and felt that the ban was both unnecessary, discriminatory and disrespectful. Michael wrote to the Red Cross with his concerns, but there was no reply.

He then approached the Tasmanian Gay and Lesbian Rights Group for advice, and the Hobart Community Legal Service was engaged to prepare Michael's cases and represent him.

Michael has the on-going support of the Tasmanian Gay and Lesbian Rights Group and the Hobart Community Legal Service.

#### **9. What solutions do we want?**

We want the Red Cross to stop banning sexually active gay and bisexual men from giving blood purely on the basis of their sexual activity. We want the Red Cross to put in place a new policy which applies risk assessment equitably.

This means asking all potential blood donors about relevant aspects of their individual medical and...

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...sexual history including whether or not they only have sex with a regular partner and whether or not they have safe sex. We also want the Red Cross to conduct a community education campaign, once its ban is lifted, to alert all gay and bisexual men to the fact that their blood donations are welcomed.

#### **10. What about other banned groups?**

Intravenous drug users and sex workers are also banned from giving blood because of higher rates, or perceived risk, of HIV.

Like gay and bisexual men, members of these groups are arguably more likely to be aware of the risks of HIV and take measures to protect their health.

Like gay and bisexual men they should not be banned as a group from giving blood but should be assessed individually on the basis of their medical and/or sexual history.

#### **11. Is public opinion behind a change in policy?**

When the ban was put in place 20 years ago much less was known about what causes AIDS, how it was transmitted and detected.

At that stage many people, including many gay and bisexual men, thought the ban necessary. A generation on we know that AIDS is not a gay disease and that health risks arise not from male-to-male sex but from unsafe sex.

We believe that Australia has moved on from the panic of the mid-1980s and that many Australians now feel that more appropriate and rational blood screening policies are needed.

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### **Regional PFLAG contacts**

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

### **Iran executes two gay teenagers**

According to newspaper reports, two gay Iranian teenagers - one 18, the other believed to be 16 or 17, were executed for the "crime" of homosexuality, the Iranian Student News Agency (ISNA) reported on July 19. ISNA also provided the terrifying photos of the teens' last moments you see on below.

The two youths, who according to reports were identified as Farbod Mostaar and Ahmad Chooka, were hanged on July 19 in Edalat (Justice) Square in the city of Mashhad in north-eastern Iran, on the orders of Court 19.

The hanging of the teens was also reported by the National Council of Resistance of Iran.

To view these news articles online, please visit <http://news.google.com/news?q=iran+gay+execution>



Roger Fedyk, Convener of Gold Coast's PFLAG chapter, has sent the following email to the Iranian Ambassador in Australia...

Dear Dr. Hamid Aboutalebi  
Ambassador Of The Islamic Republic Of Iran

As-Salaam Alaikum [*ed: an Islamic greeting, which greets in peace and in the name of Allah.*]

I am writing to request an official response to recent newspaper reports that Iran has put to death a number of persons who are homosexuals.

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Can you please confirm or otherwise that such executions have taken place?

Can you provide references within the Koran where such executions, if they have taken place, are mandated?

If execution of homosexuals does take place in Iran, can you please provide an explanation how such executions are consistent with Human Rights conventions that are required from member states of the United Nations?

In the case of confirmed executions taking place, how does Iran justify its international Human Rights

obligations? If execution of homosexuals takes place in Iran when will this practice stop?

Does Iran execute other persons on the basis of their non-conformity with expected societal norms such as on the basis of low intelligence or cerebral palsy or degenerative diseases etc.?

*Roger Fedyk*

*Convener, Gold Coast Chapter, PFLAG (Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays) Queensland, Australia*

You too can make your views on this topic known. The ambassador's email address is [ambassador@iranembassy.org.au](mailto:ambassador@iranembassy.org.au)

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### Stonewall Medical Centre

52 Newmarket Road, Newmarket  
Telephone 3857 1222

### The Gay & Lesbian Business Association Inc.

PO Box 67, Spring Hill QLD 4004  
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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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