



Welcome

A huge bouquet must go to Graham Norton - the Queensland AIDS Council State Coordinator for Regional Workers and Health. Graham was our guest speaker at our last meeting, and was very interesting to listen to and very willing to take time to chat to the group about a variety of issues. Thank you Graham for taking the time to inform the group about the needs and concerns of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender of rural and regional Queensland.

The meeting was quite large, with plenty happening. I understand it can be pretty confronting for parents when they attend their first meeting. Over the years some have said that it's time they really have to acknowledge they have a gay / lesbian child.

For others, it's the first time they can speak freely and openly about their own fears and concerns regarding their child while some pretend they're ok when realistically they're not and have a real internal struggle.

Interestingly, this last meeting was quite emotional for even some of the parents who have been attending meetings for years. So for those who feel self conscious about shedding tears, just know that loving parents are never immune from this very human show of emotion. I look forward to seeing you at the next meeting.

Shelley
(Convener, PFLAG Brisbane)

Next Meeting

Our next meeting will be held on Saturday the 6th of May, at 1:30pm. Our meetings are located in the QuAC building - located at 187 Melbourne Street, West End (cnr. Edmonstone & Melbourne Streets).

Parking and entrance located at rear of building (off Edmonstone Street). While we check the main front

door to the building before the meeting begins, the conference room is around the back and we won't be able to hear anyone knocking on the front door. Please enter via the rear glass door next to the car park.

This may quite possibly be our last meeting at this venue, as from early June we will be based at Newstead... but more on that in the next issue.

Rural high school mail out

PFLAG Brisbane recently sent out hundreds of information packs to high schools in rural Queensland, in an effort to provide a resource to call upon should they require it.

Many thanks to Vashti who has patiently sat and filled enough envelopes to send throughout Queensland letting guidance officers and health nurses know we are here. Thanks also to Lynne and Grainne for their patience in addressing them. The good news is it seems to be working.

We have had quite a few seeking information and resources to assist rural and regional youth. And, what's better they're happy to pay.

Gay & Lesbian Immigration Taskforce

In early March, Brisbane's PFLAG convener Shelley Argent was asked to speak to GLITF a group that meets regularly at the Sportsman Hotel.

While the number of same sex relationships (with international partners) in Brisbane was surprising, it was sad to hear the problems that so many have experienced - either getting their partners into the country or keeping them here due to visa problems.

Again this problem would be minimised if marriage was

legalised for those who are same sex attracted. The group however, were all very friendly and interested in what PFLAG is achieving as an organisation.

Event - Mardi Gras

This year, another fairly large contingent of “out & proud” PFLAG parents marched in the Sydney Gay & Lesbian Mardi Gras parade.



Photo: PFLAG mum Meryl with daughter Catherine, and PFLAG Brisbane convener Shelley with her husband Don.

Meryl and Shelley marched in 2000 but it seemed as if this year was bigger and better. The crowds and noise was amazing! Meryl met a young couple on Sunday morning who had traveled from Melbourne to watch the parade but went back to the hotel early because the crowd was so large they couldn't see anything.



Photo: The PFLAG contingent gathers & prepares hours in advance.

This must have been disappointing for them, but with over 600,000 people of all ages, genders, cultures, religions and sexualities watching on the street, shows that the parade was another huge success for the organisers.



Photo: The PFLAG contingent marching down Oxford Street, Sydney.

When asked about her Mardi Gras experience this year, Shelley said “I absolutely loved being in Sydney at this time of year... I love seeing the many same sex couples holding hands and being attentive to each other which is something we heterosexuals take for granted every week of the year, not just on a special occasion like Mardi Gras.”

But with a 3km+ parade route, we were all glad when the walking part was over. Shelley added "...I was very pleased to be home again on the Sunday. I was tired and had very sore feet! But none the less, I do hope to march again in 2007".

For many more parade photos (including the ones you see here in our newsletter) & videos, please visit www.andypudmenzky.com/travel/sydney/2006/mar/

We look forward to seeing you at the 2007 parade!

Website Update

The PFLAG Brisbane website received 11,147 & 18,975 hits in February & March 2006 respectively, taking our total hits to just over 63,000 since the new website launched in September 2005. This is made up of 306 unique computers (visitors) in February & 503 in March.

8pm was the most popular hour of the day to visit our website in February, and 5pm in March. So far, 118 people have read our March 2006 newsletter directly from the website.

The most popular document on the site is still Shelley's booklet, "Sexuality is not a choice", which was downloaded 291 times in February, and 339 times in March.

While the majority of visitors have been finding our site by directly entering the address into their web browser, we have also had visitors come from Google & Yahoo web searches, the Open Doors & QNews websites, as well as the Brisbane Gay & Lesbian Business Network website. Our site is also linked from several personal weblogs (blogs).

Interestingly, people who found us via a search engine were using a range of keywords, including Shelley's name, "Gay support in Brisbane", "gay child", "gay son", "parents & friends of gays" and "lesbians in Brisbane".

It is always interesting to view these statistics to see if the website can be improved or enhanced to make it easier to find for those who need to know more -

judging by the site's popularity, we seem to be doing well so far.

Our website address is www.pflagbrisbane.org.au.

Please note that our website statistics software does not collect or contain any personal or identifiable information about site users.

Australian Marriage Equality

Shelley has been asked to join a newly formed Brisbane group to work for equality and marriage, and is really looking forward to this challenge.

The first meeting was in March with Peter, Glenn and Theo making the trip up from Sydney to tell the group what is presently happening and how they think we should progress with the Brisbane group. If anyone is interested in attending the next meeting it will be held on the 22nd May, at 2pm at Shelley's place of residence. If you would like to be part of this group, please call Shelley on 0409 363 335.

More countries are recognising civil unions between same sex couples and several countries have relationship recognition. Even Czechoslovakia which is a communist country has relationship recognition and Spain which is predominantly Catholic have legalised same sex relationships by permitting civil unions; so why can't Australia?

The advantage to marriage over civil unions is the symbolism and if religious the church can bless their union. Marriage is how society values and celebrates partnerships and gay relationships should be seen as just as relevant as heterosexual relationships.

Civil unions like marriage remove the legal confusion and inequalities eg. social security, immigration, taxation, inheritance and family law that we heterosexuals take for granted.

Relationship Recognition which is similar for heterosexual de facto couples means there is a period of two years before the relationship is recognised legally.

And, the problem for same sex couples presently is they don't have the choice or privilege of achieving instantaneous recognition of marriage or civil unions like heterosexuals.

Interestingly, Tasmania has a relationship register and only 2 of the 57 couples who have registered their relationship have dissolved. How we wish the statistics for heterosexual relationship were as positive. Perhaps same sex couples appreciate the significance of what they have?

Rural Project

We have embarked on a huge project for 2006... it is our goal to get information packs into all State High Schools, General Practitioners, Libraries and Community Health Workers including the Police service throughout Queensland by the end of the year.

The pack is to include a handbook for professionals to give them extra understanding of LGBT issues especially when dealing with young people and their families, a booklet for parents, brochures, a CD with parents' stories, a booklet for youth and a booklet especially for regional and rural parents which we hope will hasten their understanding and be more accepting.

We will also be including a poster that can be displayed in their offices and a rainbow sticker which can also be shown to show they're gay friendly.

Concern about gay bashings

Letters were sent to the Commissioner of Police, Judy Spence and Peter Beattie about our concerns about the growing violence in the Valley.

Much of the problem is now because several straight clubs are moving into what was once a pretty safe region. Some believe part of the problem is the "lockdowns" with some of the LGBT community running between clubs close to the time.

Grainne and Janet attended the forum we were invited to with a statement showing our concerns and possible ways to remedy the problem. So the outcome will be in the next newsletter, plus I'm sure greatly discussed at the next meeting. We are pleased that the police are acknowledging there is a problem and are prepared to listen to our concerns and points of view.

Often times, people don't report the abuse to police. If

you, your child, or someone you know has had problems in the Valley please at least contact www.whatworks.net.au and have it recorded.

This way, the gay community can develop its own data base of assaults which long term will be helpful in getting the problem sorted out.

Annual Membership now due

So often people ask "how can I help PFLAG?" Well this is a good time - by paying membership, you can support the group to continue to assist others. Remember, how you felt when your child disclosed their sexual orientation.

We are a group that is growing and getting stronger each year. And, we are finding that regardless of how much we do, there is always more that needs to be done. Annual membership for families is just \$25, or \$100 for corporate membership (includes advertising on the back of this newsletter, and from 1st July 2006, advertising on the PFLAG Brisbane [www.pflagbrisbane.org.au] website).

Please complete the membership form on the back page of this newsletter, and return it to PFLAG Brisbane at PO Box 3142 South Brisbane 4101. You can also pay your membership (or make a donation) safely & securely using your credit card via our website, at www.pflagbrisbane.org.au (follow the links from the homepage).

Thank you for your ongoing support - it really does make a difference!

Helpline

Just a reminder that you can reach the PFLAG Brisbane helpline on 0400 767 832.

Many thanks to Grainne, Lynne, Maggie and Meryl who have volunteered to take on this very important role for PFLAG.

If you wish to volunteer to help us out, please contact Shelley Argent (please see the back of this newsletter, or www.pflagbrisbane.org.au for contact details).

Our sponsors

Please support our sponsors, so they can continue to support us!

Harrison Plumbing and Gas Services

Alan (Northside) - 0418 739 859
Dean (Southside) - 0408 707 411
Or email us - harrisonplumbing@powerup.com.au

Stonewall Medical Centre

52 Newmarket Road, Newmarket
Telephone 3857 1222

The Gay & Lesbian Business Association Inc.

PO Box 67, Spring Hill QLD 4004
info@brisbaneglbn.org www.brisbaneglbn.org



PFLAG Brisbane (Shelley Argent)

Mail: PO Box 3142 South Brisbane 4101
Office: 187 Melbourne Street, West End 4101
Phone: 3017 1739 or call the helpline on 0400767832
Email: info@pflagbrisbane.org.au
Internet: www.pflagbrisbane.org.au

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



Wickham Hotel

308 Wickham Street, Fortitude Valley

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

www.bigbuddaboom.com.au or **info@bigbuddaboom.com.au**

Corporate events & Staging // Artwork & Design
Web design & hosting // Audio engineering

Gladstone Road Medical Centre

38 Gladstone Road, Highgate Hill
Telephone 3844 9899

PFLAG Brisbane - Annual Membership Form

Please complete the form below and return to PFLAG by 30th June 2006 (mailing details above). You can also pay online, via www.pflagbrisbane.org.au. Larger donations are always welcome. Thanks for your support!

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Mailing address: _____

Email: _____

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

Corporate (\$100 annually [incl. website & newsletter advertising]; I have included a cheque or Australia Post money Order)