

MARCH 2014

PFLAG Brisbane

Supporting families with lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer loved ones

Message from Deb

Mardi Gras 2014 - what an amazing experience! Janet and I arrived in Sydney around lunch time. We had to meet the PFLAG group under the BIG tree in Hyde Park. This caused lots of giggles, anyone who has been to Hyde Park would understand why!!

We finally met up with the Sydney and Canberra groups. After registering we wandered around and soaked up the atmosphere taking lots of photos. In fact at one stage we started to feel a bit like stalkers!!

Finally the moment arrived when we set off down Oxford Street. I was so overcome I had tears in my eyes. Thousands and thousands of people cheering, high fiving and blowing kisses. To add to this as we rounded a corner we heard 'Mum' and there was Janet's son Simon, wow what a highlight. On we went proud and elated to be part of it all. Again amongst the crowd I heard 'Deb' and there was Phil Browne (LGBTIQ activist from Brisbane). Oh how exciting it all was.

We had a wonderful night and are already excited for next year. We hope we can get more of our Brissie group to attend and experience this wonderful day. Personally I can think of no better way to support my son and in fact the whole LGBTIQ community.

Happy Mardi Gras
Deb
(PFLAG Brisbane committee member)



Deb and Janet met up with representatives from PFLAG ACT at the Mardi Gras. From the right: Deb, Janet, Chris, Ivan (Deputy National Director for Australian Marriage Equality) and Ivan's mum.

Next PFLAG Brisbane meeting – Saturday 5 April

The meeting starts at 1.30pm and will be held at Queensland Association of Healthy Communities, 30 Helen Street, Teneriffe.

The visiting speaker is Gai Lemon, Director – Healthy Communities Program, Queensland AIDS Council (QAC). Gai will be talking to us about the work that QAC undertakes to promote the health and well-being of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer Queenslanders.

You are very welcome to come and join us.



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My Story

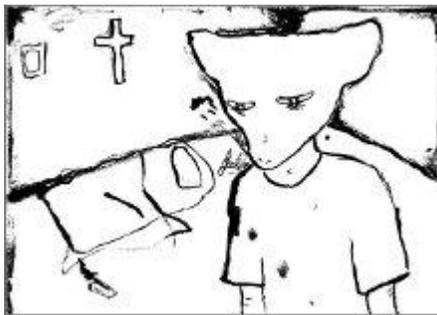
The first time I heard of PFLAG was when I watched the Generation X film "Reality Bites" in 1994. In a scene that lasts only 30 seconds, a character prepares to come out to his parents, and he mentions PFLAG, Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays. At the time I was 20 years old (still in the closet) and I thought: "those lucky Americans have a support group called PFLAG". I couldn't imagine Australians would ever be so fortunate.

My first gay pride rallies were in Hobart, Tasmania. I wanted LGBT people to be able to safely participate in society, without fear of ostracism or violence. In 1993 I experienced the harm that homophobia does first hand, when a young friend committed suicide. A year later, homosexuality was decriminalised in Tasmania, a major breakthrough for LGBT rights, but too late for my friend Matthew.

So much has changed in 20 years. Now I'm a member of PFLAG Brisbane, seeking support for my teenage son. It can be an unfriendly world, but life is much easier with the support of family and friends.

My son is a 16 year old Trans man, in a relationship with his boyfriend, but he rejects labels, he's just being himself. He has a talent for Japanese language, art and music.

He didn't have a good experience with mainstream schooling. Primary school was OK because it was a small school and quite sheltered but high school was big and frightening. My son felt like an outsider at the school, he was bullied and in the end he was afraid to go to the toilet or wait outside a classroom. It got so bad that my son refused to go to school and felt suicidal.



"Oblivion" by Campanella

Luckily my son had a friend who went to Open Doors, Brisbane's LGBT youth organisation, and my son found out about Albert Park Flexible Learning Centre (APFLC).



The school's description: "Albert Park Flexible Learning Centre is much more than a school. It is a safe, warm and inclusive community which welcomes participation from a wide cross section of young people between the ages of 15 and 25. At the school there are groups of young parents, young people who have been involved in the justice system, young people who experience mental health issues and homelessness, and those who have been bullied or have been excluded from mainstream schooling for various reasons. Young people work with a blend of teachers, youth and community development workers, arts specialists, support staff and volunteers."



Rainbow Cubby House built by the pupils at Albert Park Flexible Learning Centre.

I think APFLC is Brisbane's best kept secret because my son has a LGBT friendly space to learn and socialise, in a school that celebrates diversity and values the individual.

Written by Jen Heathwood

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Awareness can reduce HIV-related stigma

Stigma remains the biggest barrier to effective HIV treatment and prevention, and this is where you can make a REAL difference.

By ensuring you have current information on HIV, you can make a change and stop STIGMA of HIV. No longer is a HIV diagnosis a death sentence, no longer are HIV medications as toxic to the body and no longer should fear be associated with HIV.

What would you do if your child brought home their new partner, who mentioned that they were HIV positive? What would your reaction be?

As a parent, concern for your child is paramount, which means that fear may be your first reaction in this situation. This doesn't need to be so! Advances in HIV treatment and prevention mean that with early diagnosis and commencement of medication, HIV is *virtually* impossible to acquire with continued use of condoms.

Fear or concern are not needed for your child if they are HIV positive or if they have a partner who is positive. Up-to-date accurate facts and support are what is needed.

We need to work together now to let the community know that stigma and discrimination are not acceptable. If HIV is discussed with your children, or family, friends or strangers, let them know that

- HIV is a chronic, manageable illness
- early diagnosis and early treatment mean that HIV is far less likely to be passed on
- you will not treat someone differently due to their HIV status and neither should they.

Feel free to call us (1800 636 241 – ask for Tammy) and we can have a chat and post a resource pack out to you for further information. You can also check out our amazing short films on stigma and get information on supporting your loved one, at: www.qpp.net.au/talking

Written by Tammy Rudduck, Community HIV Education and Prevention Officer Queensland Positive People.

Coffee and conversation



A few Saturdays ago some of us met up at MacDonaldis in Indooroopilly for a chat. It was relaxed, friendly and very different from our regular PFLAG Brisbane meetings. In a couple of months we'll be doing the same thing at another venue and hope you can join us.

Shelley receives another award



Shelley Argent received the Sunshine Coast Pride Festival's 'Lifetime Pride Award' for encouraging greater understanding and acceptance of all LGBTIQ people and for tirelessly lobbying governments, politicians and organizations on many issues including discrimination, surrogacy, adoption, civil partnerships and marriage equality. Shelley has previously been awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia for service to the community through raising awareness of LGBTIQ issues.

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MARCH 2014

PFLAG Brisbane meeting dates

Saturday 5 April 2014
Saturday 14 June 2014
Saturday 2 August 2014
Saturday 11 October 2014
Saturday 6 December 2014

Events for your diary

Queeriosity – Open Doors Youth event – Sat 12 April

International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia - Sat May 17 at New Farm Park

Theatre

Screens and Queens Q & A, Wed 2 April
Meet Olympian Matthew Mitcham as he discusses the twists and turns of being an elite athlete who is gay.
Part of Brisbane Queer Film Festival 2014
Book signing 5.30pm / Turbine Platform
Q&A 6pm / Powerhouse Theatre
Film 7pm / Powerhouse Theatre
www.brisbanepowerhouse.org

'Cock' by Mike Bartlett
At the La Boite Theatre Company, 27 Mar – 12 April
This cheekily titled comedy earned rave reviews in London and New York, picking up an Olivier Award, and comes to Brisbane direct from its Australian premiere at Melbourne Theatre Company.
www.laboite.com.au

"Nature loves diversity, society hates it."
- Milton Diamond

PFLAG Brisbane

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