

PFLAG - PERTH



NEWSLETTER JULY / AUGUST 2009

PARENTS FAMILIES AND FRIENDS OF LESBIANS AND GAYS PERTH INC

THE OBJECTIVES OF PFLAG ARE TO:

- Provide a support system for parents, families and friends of lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans-sexual and intersex people, in an effort to understand, accept and support them with love and pride.
- Offer loving support and understanding to lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans-sexual and intersex people.
- Support and encourage the recognition of full human rights for them.
- Help parents, family members and friends to learn what the current members of PFLAG have already learnt and to help change attitudes in society and create an environment of understanding, so that all lesbian, gay bisexual, trans-sexual and intersex people can live with dignity and respect.

HAPPY 20TH YEAR PFLAG - PERTH

Hello Everyone

Well here we are at the end of another PFLAG year. It seems to have been a year of problems for PFLAG as a group and certainly for some members. Now we are faced with the fact that the positions of all committee members and officers will become vacant at the time of the AGM. Hopefully all will be filled by willing members. However, sadly, at our last committee meeting all members declined to be nominated as an active President. So, unless the situation changes we will again be obliged to elect a President in name only, for legal purposes, and take turns at sharing the Chairperson's job in the coming year. This works OK but doesn't, on the whole, present a good image for PFLAG.

We are happy to report that Jill, our contact member in Bunbury, has now returned home, much better after treatment and trying to get her life back together after badly breaking her elbow and kneecap in a fall. Elfie also showed a cheerful face at our last meeting after her stint with chemotherapy recently. And happily, John Wilson is almost back to normal after wrecking his shoulder a few months back. Cheers to you all.

John Pugh (Acting President)

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING Notice for all members.

Would all PFLAG - Perth members please note that our AGM is to be held on August 8th at 12.30pm, before the normal meeting at 1.30pm.

This is an important meeting so please make every effort to attend.

NB – All readers: Our newsletter is mailed to many PFLAG groups, Gay groups and official bodies that we do not ask to or want to subscribe. Also apart from Members and 'Newsletter Only People', new contact persons also receive the Newsletter free for a period of time.

However if you are in this latter category and wish to continue we would like you to join as a member or as a 'Newsletter Only' recipient. If this is not affordable and you would still like to receive the Newsletter please let the Secretary know. If we don't hear from you we will assume you want to break the contact and will drop you from our mailing list at the end of this year.

PRIDE MONTH - PFLAG will be involved with Fairday on Sunday 17th September and then the Pride Parade on the night of Saturday 31st October. Please bring all bright ideas to our next meetings to help us create a good showing for our 20th anniversary celebration year.

PFLAG members have most contact with troubled parents. However Pride Fairday (a real fun day) gives us a great opportunity to show ourselves to the GLBTIQ Community, and to hand out helpful literature. We are a group of mums, dads and friends, willing to meet and talk to young people (and older ones) as well as their parents. From our own experience we can help them tackle the problems with family relationships that may eventuate or have been caused by them "coming out" as GLBTIQ.

From PFLAG in the USA

The following article is part of a report issued by PFLAG in the USA. Incident reports and hearsay indicate that similar conditions exist in many Australian schools although, as far as I know, no similar comprehensive survey has been done here.

An advocacy and support group for the families and friends of lesbian and gay people has launched a new community-based safe schools programme.

Cultivating Respect includes training seminars for parents and allies, empowering people at local level to work directly with their community leaders and school administrators to protect LGBT students.

Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) plans trainings across the country next year.

"Too many students attend school in fear, and too few school administrators and leaders understand just how damaging a hostile learning environment can be for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender young people," said PFLAG executive director Jody M. Huckaby.

"*Cultivating Respect*" is the very first programme designed to identify and mobilise a grassroots network of parents and allies to take an active role in combating anti-gay behaviour, policies, information and environments in their local schools.

"When children do not feel safe, they cannot learn, and their school experience becomes fraught with the long-lasting effects of unchecked hostility."

The most comprehensive study ever undertaken into the experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) students in the United States found they face widespread abuse.

GLSEN, the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network, released the *2007 National School Climate Survey* in October. 6,209 middle and high school students took part.

GLSEN said nearly 9 out of 10 LGBT students (86.2%) experienced harassment at school in the past year, three-fifths (60.8%) felt unsafe at school because of their sexual orientation and a third (32.7%) skipped a day of school in the past month because of feeling unsafe.

22.1% of LGBT students reported being physically assaulted at school in the past year because of their sexual orientation, while 73.6% heard derogatory remarks such as 'faggot' or 'dyke' frequently or often at school.

31.7% of LGBT students missed a class and 32.7% missed a day of school in the past month because of feeling unsafe, compared to only 5.5% and 4.5%, respectively, of a national sample of secondary school students.

The reported grade point average of students who were more frequently harassed because of their sexual orientation or gender expression was almost half a grade lower than for students who were less often harassed (2.8 versus 2.4).

NB PFLAG in the USA has much greater resources and personnel than Australia to carry out a program like this. If PFLAG Australia wanted to tackle similar problems which certainly exist in Australian schools, devoted energetic members and bureaucratic co-operation would certainly be needed, throughout Australia.

ILGA MEMBERSHIP PROPOSAL FOR PFLAG [A letter to PFLAG]

PFLAG is an organisation known countrywide for its extensive work in providing social support to families and the friends of Australia's LGBTI community. Recently your organisation (PFLAG - Perth) celebrated its 20th anniversary, and with the aid of a donation from the settlement of a class action against John Laws, run with support by representative associations like ILGA, is once again a thriving organisation ready for new challenges in 2009 and beyond.

The International Lesbian and Gay Association (ILGA) recognises your organisation's valued and continued contribution to Australian Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex (LGBTI) society. We are hoping that your organisation is in a position to consider becoming a member organisation of ILGA.

ILGA would like to take this opportunity to remind members of the benefits to member organisations in being actively involved in the world through ILGA. ILGA is a grass-roots organisation and for thirty one years, since its inception in 1978, it has thrived on its 670 member organisations, from over 110 countries, around the world. It is the only LGBTI organisation to have constituent members in every continent. ILGA has Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) status through its European branch and regularly advocates at the United Nations.

A recent sign-on statement was launched to extend existing United Nations human rights to the international LGBTI community all around the world. We hope your organisation will continue to support ILGA in its international goals. ILGA membership is more important this year than ever before.

The many positive changes in some countries and particularly here in Australia make it even more important to recognise that for LGBTI sexuality, 5 countries have the death penalty, 79 countries declare it to be illegal and 16 countries have an unequal age of consent, whilst only 7 countries have same-sex marriage, 10 countries have same-sex adoption and only 10 countries have constitutional protections for LGBTI sexuality. The United Nations is presently taking its first steps in recognizing sexuality as a human right.

Recently ILGA and its member organisation, Naz foundation in India, saw the culmination of a 20 year campaign to legalise homosexuality in India. Previously it was also instrumental in putting pressure on Burundi not to criminalise homosexuality in that country. Globally its campaigns to achieve an equal age of consent, legalise same sex marriage and decriminalise homosexuality have made great strides for the average LGBTI person, no matter where they live in the world. These advances have been possible using ILGA's extensive membership, which is why becoming an ILGA membership is so important.

ILGA is keen to reinvigorate the ANZAPI (Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific Islands) region of ILGA and is urging those queer rights organisations in the region whose membership has lapsed or who are not yet ILGA members to become financial. This will offer vital support to member groups in other parts of the region who may be less well resourced or have additional challenges to those closer to home.

Whilst ILGA has many members in Australia we have been aware that, up until now, your organisation has not been part of ILGA's international constituency One of ILGA's ANZAPI representatives will be contacting you soon to discuss this further.

Yours Sincerely, SIMON MARGAN LYN MORGAIN JOEY MATAELE

(ILGA) International Lesbian and Gay Association www.ilga.org

NB : *At its last committee meeting, PFLAG - Perth Inc decided to go ahead and link up with ILGA.*

Court allows gay sex

NEW DELHI

A top Indian court issued a landmark ruling yesterday decriminalising gay sex between consenting adults, overturning colonial-era legislation that outlawed homosexuality.

The New Delhi High Court ruled that an existing statute prohibiting homosexual acts was discriminatory and therefore a "violation of fundamental rights".

The statute in question is a British colonial-era law outlawing "carnal intercourse against the order of nature".

"West Australian, Friday 3/7/09

- I was educated once and it took me years to get over it.
- Put the blame where it belongs, on someone else.
- If you can't go around it, over it or through it, negotiate with it!
- Life is filled with ups and downs but most of the time I seem to be going sideways.
- Don't let yourself suffer needlessly! Find a need to suffer.
- It's easy to come and go, the hardest thing is to remain.

From Ginger Meggs in the "West Australian"

