



**Parents & Friends of Lesbians and Gays NSW Inc.
(Incorporating Western Sydney)**

January 2015 Newsletter VOLUME 18 – ISSUE 1

The next meeting of PFLAG NSW Inc. (Incorporating Western Sydney) will be:

Saturday, 24th January at 2pm in the Conference Room, Wesley Lodge Motel. Wesley Lodge is situated at the corner of Hawkesbury & Queens Roads, Westmead, opposite Westmead Hospital and within walking distance of the Train station.

Car entry to the Wesley Lodge carpark is from Hawkesbury Rd via a boom gate.

For Information contact: Judy on (02) 9869 1454 Postal Address: PO Box 3751, Marsfield NSW 2122. Email: jr_brown@bigpond.net.au

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President's Report

"We'll advance human dignity by standing up for the rights of minorities. No-one's equality should ever be denied...we will stand up for our gay and lesbian fellow citizens, because they need to be treated equally under the law." –

- US President, Barack Obama, in his speech to around 1000 students on November 14 at the University of Queensland during the G20 Summit of world leaders in Brisbane.

President of the NSW Upper House, Liberal MP Don Harwin disclosed that he is gay in a speech to the Legislative Council on the last sitting day of State Parliament, November 20, 2014. He joins other openly gay NSW MPs, including Labor's Penny Sharpe and Helen Westwood, Liberal Bruce Notley-Smith and Independent, Alex Greenwich. Mr Harwin told the Parliament he had made a submission to the Senate Inquiry on Marriage Equality, stating that excluding gay couples from the institution of marriage was discrimination that must end.

Mr Harwin added: *"I hope that my many friends who are waiting for the opportunity to marry will not have to wait too much longer for the Commonwealth Parliament to reform the law."*

Helen Westwood had previously told of the hardship she has suffered as an openly gay MP. During Upper House debate on gay marriage in 2012, she spoke of being in a lesbian relationship and having 8 grandchildren. *"There's just no evidence that my children or my grandchildren have been disadvantaged by being raised in a same-sex relationship"*, she said.

Thank you to all who came along to our AGM and Christmas Party on November 22nd. Thanks also to Pastor Robert Clark from MCC Good Shepherd, Granville, who acted as returning officer for our elections. The results are as follows:

President: Judy Brown

Vice-President: Ruth Green

Secretary/Public Officer: Narelle Phipps

Treasurer: Ron Green

Newsletter Editor: Natalie Cooper

Publicity Officer: Ray Brown

Education Officer: Sue Mico

Librarian: Louise Pethybridge

Committee members: Pamela and Arthur Garske, Marilyn Godfrey, Carol McCance, Gillian Maury, Les Mico, Mollie Smith, Geoff Thomas.

I would like to thank the committee members for assuming their roles for 2015 and particularly welcome new member, Natalie Cooper.

N.B. Committee members, members, family and friends who wish to participate in **PFLAG's 2015 Mardi Gras** contingent on **March 7**, should register with Judy ASAP, either by emailing info@pflagaustralia.org.au or phoning 9869 1454 or 0439 466 125, as numbers are limited. Details will be on the calendar section of the website: www.pflagaustralia.org.au or on the PFLAG Sydney facebook page.

Ray and I attended the Surry Hills Police Community Engagement Meeting on November 27, where we heard about the latest goings on with all the GLBTI local community organisations, City of Sydney Council and NSW State Parliament. Notice was given of activities being planned to celebrate 100 years of women in policing and 25 years of GLOs (gay & lesbian liaison officers) in 2015.

Thanks to Acceptance Sydney for inviting us to their World AIDS Day Mass on November 28. It was a very moving liturgy. Fr Peter, in his sermon, spoke of his early pastoral work, ministering to patients in the Coast hospital, suffering from undiagnosed infectious diseases, which he suspects were early HIV/AIDS cases. He also spoke of the movie "Pride", which he said addressed so many issues on so many levels and gave us an insight into the enormous suffering of those affected by HIV/AIDS in those early years.

Also on November 28, St. Vincent's Hospital acknowledged the 30th Anniversary of Ward 17 South. St. Vincent's CEO, Associate Professor Anthony Schembri, acknowledged the vision, determination and pioneering courage of Sr Margaret Mines and the Sisters of Charity, who had stated: *"All people with HIV/AIDS who need medical help will stay at this hospital."* It became the leading hospital for people living with HIV/AIDS. Sr Margaret, in reply, said: *"I saw a great need to create a place of compassion where people with the virus would come to just be themselves, where nobody would be discriminated against, where there would be no labelling of people and where people, their families and carers would be free to have the dignity God had already given them and be offered the respect that was their due."*



Many thanks to the Pollys Club, who chose PFLAG as one of 4 recipients of their annual charity grants. Ray and I attended the Pollys Club Christmas Dance and Annual Charity Presentation at the Roundhouse, UNSW, on December 6, where we were presented with a cheque for \$500 to assist us with our outreach to parents and families of GLBTI people.

Thank you to Gillian and Jean-Pierre, who represented PFLAG at Lord Mayor Clover Moore's Christmas celebration for volunteers on December 7 at Sydney Town Hall. They caught up with Member for Sydney, Alex Greenwich and many other contacts.

Pam and I spoke to a group of 340 Headspace Practitioners at the Uniting Care Mental Health Staff Practice Forum at Ryde-Eastwood Leagues Club on December 8. A number of practitioners approached us on the day to thank us and Dr Tiffany Bodiam, Research Education Manager, reported much positive feedback.

Ray and I were pleased to be a part of ACON's "Start Making Sense" panel, addressing young gay men, on December 9 at Surry Hills. We received quite a bit of feedback on the night and have since been contacted by one of the young men, with whom we are having ongoing communication.

Thanks to Narelle, who agreed to be interviewed by Kimberley Gillan for Yours Magazine (a new magazine for women aged 50+) for a positive story about parents learning life lessons from their children.

Ray and I attended Acceptance Sydney's Christmas Service at St. Joseph's Newtown on December 19, which involved some thought-provoking guest speakers, high quality carol singing and an enjoyable get-together in the crypt afterwards. Ruth and Ron and Ray and I were very warmly welcomed by Pastor Robert Clark and the congregation at the Metropolitan Community Church, Good Shepherd, Granville at their beautiful Christmas Service on December 21. We also enjoyed singing "Happy Birthday" to Fr Stephen (aka Stella) and sharing in his birthday cake amongst other Christmas goodies.

Pam, Arthur and Jeff attended MCC Sydney's Christmas Eve Service at Sydney Town Hall. Pam reported that the Anglican Minister from Gosford, the Rev Rod Bower, gave an excellent talk, based on the incident in WW1 when the opposing sides sang Christmas carols and each side's humanity shone through.

I was thrilled to have received an email from Heather Horntvedt, the founder of PFLAG in Australia. Our founder in Western Sydney, Mollie Smith, knew some of the early history, but we've never been able to chronicle the events that formed our wonderful PFLAG organisation in Australia. We now know that the first meeting took place on 2nd December 1989 at the home of John & Margaret Pugh in WA and that they, Heather and June Smythe were founding members. Heather is putting together the early history, which we'll add to the website and the archives for future generations. This is great news!

We watched a poignant documentary on the ABC over Christmas called "Fr Ray Comes Out". It told the story of an Anglican priest from Greenwich in the UK, who had decided to share a very personal secret with his congregation. The catalyst for this brave decision was a spate of GLBTI youth suicides. He felt his silence was complicit in the suffering of others. Fr Ray says: *"I don't believe in a God that rejects and punishes people for being who they are."*

I hope to see many of you at our first family meeting for 2015 on January 24, for as Rudy says: *"When you don't need PFLAG anymore, that's when PFLAG needs **You** to help others."*

- **Judy Brown**

Resources: Mental Health

Out & Online

Out & Online is the first online mental health program to prioritise the needs and experiences of same-gender attracted individuals. The program uses language inclusive of lesbian women and gay men, and acknowledges some of the unique challenges faced by young lesbian and gay people. The program incorporates 8 modules, designed to be completed over 8 weeks, and includes cognitive behavioural strategies, interactive activities and relaxation exercises to overcome symptoms of worry, stress and sadness and improve wellbeing. Most importantly, the program is specifically tailored to the gender and mental health-related challenges of each individual user.

Access to the program is currently available free of charge as part of a research trial being conducted by researchers from Swinburne, Deakin and Federation Universities, in consultation with mental health experts and same-gender attracted young people, in order to test the effectiveness of the program. Program development has been funded by *beyondblue*. Following evaluation, improvements will be made based on feedback received and the program will be made publicly available.

Who are we targeting?

Same-gender attracted Australian residents aged 18-25 years and currently experiencing mild-moderate mental health problems (this is determined via completion of screening surveys during the registration process).

For more information on the program:

Website – www.outandonline.org.au

Facebook – www.facebook.com/outandonline

FAIR DAY and Request for Help!

Fair Day is on Sunday 22nd February 2015 in Victoria Park, Camperdown.

Fair Day is a family fun day full of entertainment, food, fashion and stalls. Lots to see, do, buy and eat! It is traditionally the Mardi Gras' season's biggest day-time event. Each year dedicated PFLAG people set up the stall early on the Sunday morning. We spend time chatting to our many visitors, giving out information, brochures and booklets, selling our rainbow merchandise, having a good look around, generally having a fun time, and then packing up at 4 pm.

This year, we will have for sale our rainbow fold-up umbrellas, kites, neck lanyards, loom bands, PFLAG badges, caps, T-shirts and our DVD "Bouncing Castle".

Our raffle prize will be a beautiful SEIKO watch, kindly donated by Jason Lancett from SEIKO. Tickets are \$2 each, \$5 for 3, \$10 for 7, \$20 for 15.



Helpers are very welcome and essential!

Fair Day is also a major fund-raising opportunity for us. Come for a couple of hours or for the day and enjoy the camaraderie, and the chance to talk about PFLAG.

This year we need people power to help set up the stall early on the Sunday morning (say 8.30 am – the parking is usually pretty good at that time) and also to help dismantle the stall about 3.30-4 pm.

Please phone Judy on 9869 1454 to register your enthusiasm and your willingness to assist.

Special Events

Special One-Time Event: The Case Against 8 Film in Parramatta

11th February

Great news! I'm hosting a special one-time screening of the Oscar shortlisted film-The Case Against 8 on Wednesday, February 11th at 6.30pm at Event Cinemas Parramatta and I'd love for you to come.

The Case Against 8: A behind the scenes look inside the historic case to overturn California's ban on same-sex marriage (Proposition 8). The film also follows the plaintiffs, two gay couples who find their families at the centre of the same-sex marriage controversy. It also profiles the unlikely pairing of the men who spearheaded the Perry vs S Ted Olsen and David Boies, political foes who last faced off as opposing attorneys in Bush v Gore. Five years in the making, this is the story of how they took the first federal marriage equality lawsuit to the US Supreme Court.

To reserve your tickets, please visit the Tugg Event Page here: <http://www.tugg.com/events/12871>

Unlike a traditional movie screening, my Tugg screening requires that *63 tickets be reserved before February 4th* in order for the screening to take place. I'm going to need your help if we're going to make this event happen! I'd really appreciate you helping me spread the word. Tell your friends and have them join us for the special one-time screening of The Case Against 8.

- **Geoff Thomas** – PFLAG committee member.

Trivia with a Twist

20th February

I'm producing our fundraiser 'Trivia with a Twist' at Paddington RSL on Friday 20th Feb, the opening night of the Mardi Gras Festival, and we really hope your PFLAG members can come along and have some silly fun with us. The booking link is <https://triviawithatwist.eventbrite.com.au/>

We will have lots of surprises in store and really hope your members can come along and support us.

- **Laurence Stark** Events Coordinator Bobby Goldsmith Foundation

Our Purpose – To empower and support people living with HIV to live well.

GAYBIES at Darlinghurst Theatre Company 6th February – 8th March

Written and directed by Helpmann Award winner Dean Bryant, *Gaybies* is funny and moving real-life theatre, telling the story of children who have grown up in rainbow families. The scripts draws straight from interviews with children aged four to forty with same-sex parents, surrogate mums or donor dads. Deeply personal and highly topical, it's the perfect answer to anyone who has ever asked, "But what about the children?"

Gaybies was a hit at Melbourne's Midsumma and makes its Sydney premiere as part of the 2015 Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras, presented by Darlinghurst Theatre Company. It plays at Eternity Playhouse in Darlinghurst, 6 February – 8 March.

Special Early Bird Offer

Book before **Friday 6 February** to access tickets at the discounted price of \$38 to any performance of *Gaybies* (excluding Previews 6-8 Feb). Simply enter the promotional code **RAINBOW** when booking online at <http://www.darlinghursttheatre.com/whats-on/gaybies> or by phone on 8356 9987 (Mon-Fri 9.30am-5.30pm).

Mardi Gras Film Festival

The Mardi Gras Film Festival is coming to Event Cinemas in George St. Sydney.

January 15 - Full program released and tickets on sale.

February 19 – Festival starts.

March 5 - Festival ends

www.queerscreen.org.au or 02 9332 4938

- **Andrew Barnard**

Gay Christian Network Conference, 8th – 11th January

The Gay Christian Network (GCN) held its 11th Annual Conference in Portland, Oregon from 8th – 11th January. With the theme, ***Together at the Table***, 1300 LGBT Christians and allies from 14 countries joined for an amazing 4 days of fellowship, learning, workshops, speakers and friendship. The conference doubled in attendance from last year's record, and nearly half the attendees were first-timers, with many parents and pastors there to learn from and with their LGBT friends and loved ones. Sydney contributed 17 attendees!

I attended several informative workshops: *LGBT Conversation in the Church*, *Creating a More Inclusive Church*, *When Hot Topics Get Heated* and *LGBT Youth – How Can we Help Them?*



PFLAG Portland / East County Chapter had a table in the Exhibitors Hall, where I met Dawn Holt (President) and Eric Overby (Coordinator). They were delighted to meet an Aussie PFLAG member and to hear that PFLAG NSW has so many branches and is so active!

The GCN Conference is held the second week of January each year and is the largest LGBT Christian event in the world. I highly recommend the conference for any parents, family and friends who want to see through their friends' and loved ones' eyes; to learn from and develop better relationships with the gay Christian community – and to have a lot of fun!

GCN is a non-profit organisation with a very active support network of LGBT and straight ally members. For more information and to see what GCN is about and what we do, visit:

www.gaychristian.net

- **Natalie Cooper** PFLAG Committee Member

Regular Announcements

PFLAG Apparel

We now have for sale: PFLAG T-shirts @ \$25 each and white PFLAG caps @ \$10 each. We also have rainbow umbrellas and kites @ \$15 each or 2 for \$25 and rainbow lanyards and PFLAG badges @ \$3 each or 2 for \$5. Contact Judy on 9869 1454 or see us at the meetings.

Civil Marriage Celebrant

Rev Robert Clark from Metropolitan Community Church of the Good Shepherd, Granville, is a Civil Marriage Celebrant. You can check out his website: www.weddingswithflair.net

Renewal Notice Reminder

Please do not forget to renew your membership for 14/15! Thanks to all the members who have renewed already. If you joined after 30 June 2014, you are deemed to be financial until end of 2015.

Email Addresses

If you are on email, please help us reduce our costs by sending us an email with your details (which will remain confidential) and all future information will be emailed to you.

Diary Dates

Upcoming family meetings:

- January 24th
- February 28th
- March 28th
- April 25th (ANZAC Day: Meeting TBA)

Contacts:

PFLAG Penrith: Carol 02 47354680

PFLAG Northside: Maree. 02 8959 2830

PFLAG Blue Mountains: Ruth & Ron Green 02 4757 4864

PFLAG Central Coast: Helen 0431 863 799 pflag.nsw.centralcoast@gmail.com

PFLAG Northwest: Val Harris 02 6769 7552 or Fay Heywood 02 6785 7325

PFLAG Wagga Wagga: Cheryl Harvey 0439 488 202 cheryl28june@gmail.com

PFLAG Bathurst: Tony and Bernadette Sutton 02 6331 7267 nottus2@bigpond.com

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