



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

June 2014 Newsletter VOLUME 17-ISSUE 5

The next meeting of PFLAG NSW Inc. (Incorporating Western Sydney) will be on Saturday, 28 June at 2pm in the Conference Room, Wesley Lodge Motel. The Wesley Lodge is situated on the Cnr. Hawkesbury & Queens Roads, Westmead and is very close to Westmead Hospital and Train station. **Car entry is only 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

President's Report

"Rights are won only by those who make their voices heard." – Harvey Milk.

The late Lex Watson was someone who certainly endeavoured to make his voice heard above the rampant homophobia of his day. He has been an inspiration to us all.

"For many of his generation and beyond, Lex Watson was the face of gay activism in Sydney. He was a foundation member of the Campaign against Moral Persecution (CAMP), the organiser of the first gay rights demonstration, a longtime passionate advocate of homosexual law reform and of anti-discrimination legislation, a pioneer AIDS activist, and in later years, a keen advocate for the preservation of gay community history." – Robert French in his obituary to Lex Watson in the SMH of May 29, 2014.

ACON paid tribute to Lex in the Star Observer as *"a dedicated and courageous pioneer whose work laid the foundations for a more authentic, caring and inclusive society."*

Thanks to Anne, who represented PFLAG at Parliament House on May 30 to celebrate the life of Lex Watson, to mark the 30th anniversary of the decriminalisation of homosexuality and the recent passage of the Crimes Amendment (Provocation) Bill, which heralds the end of the "gay panic" defence. At the event, Anne happened to meet the Human Rights Commissioner, Tim Wilson, who told her that he was a strong supporter of PFLAG and was concerned about the suicide rates in young gay people.

Our prayers and sympathy go out to our committee members, Les & Sue Mico and to Les' mum, Madeleine and all the family on the passing of Les' dad, Domenico, on May 28. The Mass of Thanksgiving held on June 7 was a beautiful tribute to the life of a wonderful Australian, who emigrated from Italy alone at the age of 15. He has left behind a legacy of a wonderful extended family.



Thank you to the Metropolitan Community Church Good Shepherd, Granville, who kindly invited PFLAG to be the recipient of half of the proceeds from their Trivia Night on Friday, May 23. The ten of us who went along were warmly welcomed, had a really fun night, a nutritious 3 course meal and came away with lots of prizes as the PFLAG table won the trivia. The hostess, Stella (aka Fr Stephen) said some really nice things about PFLAG and we were presented with a cheque for \$293.25.

Website www.pflagaustralia.org.au Email info@pflagaustralia.org.au

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(28 June, 26 July, 23 August, 27 Sept, 25 Oct, 22 Nov)

Ray and I were again pleased to represent PFLAG as part of ACON's "Start Making Sense" community panel, talking to a small group of about 7 young gay men on May 15. Only 2 had "come out" to their parents, largely due to fear of rejection, as most had come from religious or culturally diverse backgrounds. One young man from Lebanese background feared for his life, if his visa was not renewed and he was forced to return to his country. Most of us on the panel offered to assist him with his appeal. Thanks to Ruth, who was interviewed by Benedict Brook from the Star Observer for his story "Suburbs Vs the City" in the June edition. Ruth spoke about her son's experience growing up gay in Penrith. Also, thanks to Ron, who wrote a great letter to the Blue Mountains Gazette in response to a homophobic letter from a Rural Fire Service member, reprimanding the RFS for taking part in the Mardi Gras. This prompted RFS Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons to also respond, explaining why it was so important for the RFS to be a part of the Mardi Gras.

Thank you to the Minister from St. James Anglican Church, Turramurra, Michael Stead, and his sister-in-law, PFLAG member, Natalie, for starting the conversation going at his parish on the issue of homosexuality and the church and for inviting PFLAG along to be a part of the presentation on June 4. Les, Sue, Ray and I were given a very warm welcome by the 100 or more parishioners and many chatted to us and thanked us at the supper afterwards. Natalie's friend, Rob, gave a very poignant presentation on growing up gay in the mid-west of the USA and becoming a Christian. This was the first mainstream church to which we have been invited to speak, apart from a Catholic Church youth group in the west a few years ago. It is certainly a very positive step. Thanks to Pam, Arthur, Mollie, Adela and Mal who came along to support us.

Thank you to the staff at Colo High School, who again invited PFLAG to be a part of its Year 11 Crossroads Program on May 29. Carol, Ray & I spoke to 4 separate groups of around 40 students each at Richmond Panthers Club. The students were most attentive and respectful. One of the staff "came out" publicly to the students as lesbian and her aunt, also a staff member, spoke in support. It is a credit to the Colo High staff that its students are so accepting of diversity.

Thanks to Jean-Pierre, who represented PFLAG at the Marrickville Council LGBTIQ Forum on June 11. Gillian reported that JP spoke to Julie McCrossin, who was a fabulous MC, to Guest Speaker, Cristyn Davies and to Marrickville Mayor, Jo Haylen. There were many questions about aged care and Council spoke about its recommendations for gender-neutral bathrooms. Cristyn spoke about how things could be improved for young LGBTIQ people, more inclusive language and so on and JP really enjoyed the history talk. JP was also able to buy some non- gender specific type books for the littlies.

Thanks to Geoff and his wife, Sandra, who will represent PFLAG at the Tribute Dinner to the retiring NSW Governor, the Honourable Dame Marie Bashir, at Parliament House on Friday, June 20. PFLAG's new colourful pull-up banner will be on display at the dinner.

Thanks to all who came along to our May family meeting and to Mollie for facilitating so well. At the meeting, Rob spoke about how, in the past, he had experienced homophobia in his workplace, but, was now heartened to see that his employer, the Commonwealth Bank, was ranked 4th in Pride in Diversity's Australian Workplace Equality Index. He elaborated by telling us that in recognition of IDAHOT day, all the Commonwealth Bank staff were called to take part in a one hour presentation on acceptance of diversity. Goldman Sachs was named the country's top employer for 2014.

I hope to see many of you at our June 28 Family Meeting, where **Robert French, acting President of the Pride History Group**, will be our Guest Speaker. Remember Rudy's adage: "*When you don't need PFLAG anymore, that's when PFLAG needs YOU to help others!*" **Judy**

IDAHOT day at Paddington Markets

There was also a commemoration at the Paddington markets with Alex Greenwich, the State member for Sydney and Jackie Braw, on behalf of the Police, distributing information bags, which included our PFLAG material.

PFLAG's involvement in Parramatta IDAHOT Day on Thursday 15 May

The day was very successful. Our new pull-up banner made a big impact and drew people in. Arthur had a number of very good conversations with passers-by. The Ally postcards were given to many people who appeared interested. There was a big Police presence with cars and the new Local Area Commander and Jackie Braw (Senior Programs Officer GLBTI with NSW Police) were present. There were two food stalls, which also drew people into the designated area. Parramatta Queer Forum will request the rainbow flag be raised next year and they recommend the presence of a small musical group as in 2013 which helped create a very pleasant ambience.

Pam

PFLAG's involvement in Blue Mountains IDAHOT Day on Saturday 17 May

There was a big article in the Star Observer publicising this event. The day is to celebrate the date when same-sex attraction was removed by the World Health Organisation from the mental disorder list. The day in Katoomba was a great success. There were representatives from the Council, family support services, Blue Mountains outreach community service, Richmond & Blue Mountains Health Service and local TAFE. The rainbow flag was raised at Civic Place in front of the Council Chambers and there were many rainbow flags on display at Carrington square. Because the day fell on a Saturday, this was the first time it had been held in two places.



There was a big range of guest speakers who drew big crowds, from politicians, local aboriginal people and Amnesty International for human rights, equal choice in marriage and the needs of intersex and transgender people. Neil Blewett, a former Minister for Health, spoke about the introduction of strategies for AIDS prevention. Romola Hollywood, Councillor, gave an excellent speech saying there were grave concerns about the rate of suicide and the Council wanted to be seen as accepting of diversity. Ron also did an interview with Romola Hollywood on his radio

show. A ladies choir with domestic violence issues from Richmond provided part of the wonderful entertainment. Many people participated at both venues. PFLAG had an information table, receiving lots of enquiries and PFLAG events' photos were displayed on photo boards. Ron commented that the whole day "blew him away".

State and Federal members of both major political parties had been invited. Neither Liberal member responded or came, but both Labor members came. **Ruth**



Consular Marriages

Australia's UK consulates opened their doors to same-sex couples able to marry under UK law on June 6. Marriages will begin on June 27 in Sydney and Perth, with other consulates following later.

UK consular marriages will be an important step forward for the Marriage Equality debate in Australia. Australian couples able to marry under UK law will be able to marry with family and friends around them. It will also highlight how far Australia has fallen behind other countries and increase pressure for the Coalition free vote on the issue.

Bent Art Exhibition

I attended the opening of the annual Bent Art exhibition last night both as a resident of the Blue Mountains and a representative of PFLAG.

Bent Art was established in the Blue Mountains in 2005 to celebrate works in the visual arts of Australian lesbian gay bisexual and transgender artists. The exhibition is held each year over the June long weekend from Friday to Monday.

This year is the 10th anniversary with about 50 artists exhibiting including first timers and professionals. The categories included painting sculpture digital art printmaking or drawing sculpture and alternative media. There was a great sense of community and with over 200 individual artworks to see or buy the occasion is very exciting. **Ruth**

Growing Up Queer 2014

Twenty10, along with partners, the University of Western Sydney and the Young and Well CRC, recently released 'Growing up Queer: Issues facing young Australians who are Gender Variant and Sexuality Diverse.'

A new study has found that 16% of young people who identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Intersex or Queer (LGBTIQ) have attempted suicide and 33% have harmed themselves as a result of homophobic and transphobic harassment and violence in Australian Society. More than 1000 young people aged between 16-27 years participated in the national research study, with almost two-thirds reporting homophobic or transphobic harassment or violence across different aspects of their lives including in schools, families, the workplace, the streets and other public sites, such as sporting events.

Acceptance Sydney Trivia Night – July 19

The Acceptance Trivia Night is coming and it's a "Christmas in July" theme.

All proceeds to Stanford House (Supporting people living with HIV/AIDS) and Acceptance Sydney (for GLBT Catholics).

Bring some friends & book a table. (Max 10 per table)

Dress up and bring your dinner & drinks.

Saturday, July 19 in the Crypt at St. Joseph's, Newtown.

Doors open @ 7pm. First question @ 7.30pm.

Bookings essential, email: acceptsyd@yahoo.com.au

Cost: \$20 (\$15 conc.)

New 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 13/14! Thanks to all the members who have renewed already. If you joined after 30 June 2013, you are deemed to be financial until end of 2014.

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.

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NSW Inc. PFLAG (Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians of Gays) is a group of people who share common experiences and provide support for each other. We listen and love. We help families have open, positive and loving relationships with their GLBT children and we work for their civil and human rights.

Upcoming Events: Family Meeting - Saturday 28 June @ 2pm

PFLAG Penrith: Vicki 02 4730 4660 or 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

PFLAG Albury Wodonga: Sarah 0419 019 254 pflagalburywodonga@gmail.com

PFLAG Great Lakes/Manning: Greg & Lauranne Byrne 0427 918 568
gregbyrne3@bigpond.com

PFLAG Coffs Harbour: Leanne: pflagcoffs@gmail.com

PFLAG Newcastle/Hunter: Michelle Lancey pflag.hunter@gmail.com



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