



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

July 2015 Newsletter - VOLUME 18 – ISSUE 6

PFLAG NSW Inc. (Incorporating Western Sydney) meets on the **4th Saturday of every month.**

The next meeting will be:

Saturday 25th July 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 railway station.

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

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President's Report

"When I imagine the TV pictures of our first gay marriages, I think of the isolated, and perhaps agonised, teenager who knows he is gay and wonders whether life has a place for him. I hope, watching the ceremony, he will see a ray of sunlight and hope." – Richard Glover, SMH Spectrum, June 27-28.

Thanks to Helen, Central Coast PFLAG, who posted Richard's column on our Facebook page.

I was interviewed by Pittsburg University Professor, Helma De Vries - Jordan last week for her upcoming book: *"Marriage Equality in Advanced Industrial Democracies"*. When she asked me what I said when advocating for "Marriage Equality", I replied that I say it is simply a matter of equal human rights, that I want my son to be treated equally to his siblings and that I feel once the legislation is enacted, it will go a long way to lessening the homophobic bullying and discrimination to which young gay people are presently being exposed.

Thanks to Shelley who sent through a wonderful article by Dennis Atkins, written for the Courier Mail on July 4. Dennis suggests that opponents of Marriage Equality should look at what Justice Anthony Kennedy, a Republican appointee, who wrote the majority judgement of the US Supreme Court on Marriage Equality, had to say. His speech is inspirational. He defines marriage in this way: ***"No union is more profound than marriage, for it embodies the highest ideals of love, fidelity, devotion, sacrifice and family. In forming a marital union, two people become something greater than once they were. Those who argued before the court for Marriage Equality made a case that this union continued beyond death. It would misunderstand these men and women to say they disrespect the idea of marriage. Their plea is they do respect it, respect it so deeply that they seek to find its fulfilment for themselves...They ask for equal dignity in the eyes of the law. The (US) constitution grants them that right."*** He also makes special mention of the impact that not allowing same-sex couples to marry would have on their children: ***"Without the recognition, stability and predictability marriage offers, their children suffer the stigma of knowing their families are somehow lesser. The marriage laws at issue here thus harm and humiliate the children of same-sex couples."***

Josephine Tovey, in her SMH opinion piece of July 4-5, quotes from President Barack Obama's address after the Supreme Court Decision: ***"When all Americans are treated as equal we are all more free"***. Josephine states that President Obama paid tribute to every person who had come out and their families, as well as activists and allies who had helped make it happen: ***"They should be very proud. America should be very proud."***

A number of us will be travelling to Canberra early in September to try to convince politicians, undecided on the Marriage Equality issue, to change their minds. We wait with anticipation to see what will happen with the much publicised cross-party bill in August.

Congratulations to Pam, Arthur & Stuart Garske for the wonderful interview they did with the Hills Shire Times in June. See the article later in newsletter.

Thank you to Gillian for preparing a report on the ABC TV "Q & Gay" program, aired on June 18. Thanks again to Geoff, Gillian & Jean-Pierre, Les, Susana & Vanessa, Wanda & Michelle Lancey from Newcastle, who were present in the audience. I know most of them had thought-provoking questions prepared, but unfortunately weren't given the opportunity to put them to the panel.

Congratulations to Michelle's son, Michael Lancey, who is being inducted into the Hunter Sporting Hall of Fame on Sunday, July 12, for his sailing (windsurfing).



Thanks to Kanya, PR co-ordinator for LUSH cosmetics and Becky and the team from LUSH Macquarie Centre, for inviting me to speak on behalf of PFLAG to the staff on Wednesday evening, July 1, as part of their “#GayisOK” LGBT Rights campaign. The staff were very respectful and attentive and asked a number of questions.

I'd like to thank to Geoff for doing an interview with SBS TV news recently, wearing his PFLAG T-shirt. It was amazing that one of his friends contacted him from Santiago, Chile to say he'd seen him on TV. So, awareness- raising of PFLAG NSW is going global! Thanks also to Geoff for agreeing to join Ray & I in speaking to staff at the Bank of America/Merrill Lynch on Thursday, July 16.

Congratulations to Ruth for being invited to speak to Counsellor Hollywood's IDAHOT Day report at the Blue Mountains City Council Meeting on July 21. Ruth will identify herself as the PFLAG representative on the Blue Mountains IDAHOT committee.



Thanks to everyone for coming along to our June 27 Family Meeting to offer support to new parents and to hear our wonderful guest speaker, Erin Gough, speak about her new book “The Flywheel”, which is a fictional account of a young woman coming to the realisation that she is a lesbian. For those wanting to purchase the book, Erin advised that it is available at Dymocks and other good bookshops. Thanks to Ruth for facilitating the meeting so well and to Narelle for suggesting Erin as a possible guest speaker and to Sue for issuing the invitation.

I hope to see many of you at our July 25th Family Meeting, for as Rudy always says: *“When you don't need PFLAG anymore, that's when PFLAG needs **YOU** to help others!”*

- Judy

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Pam & Arthur Garske interviewed in *The Hills Shire Times*, June 2015



Pamela and Arthur Garske hope politicians will catch up with the majority of the community and support moves to change the Marriage Act to include same-sex unions. Here is the copy from the interview with Pam and Arthur in their local newspaper, *The Hills Shire Times*.

The Winston Hills couple believe it is about having the choice.

Their son Stuart, 40, has been in a same-sex relationship for three years and is not sure if he wants to get married but would like to have the choice.

“Lots of couples don’t get married but they have a choice,” Mrs Garske said.

She has written several times to local MPs, both state and federal, about the issue but believes they are too entrenched in their own ideas.

She said her son had been bullied in primary and high school by children who called him gay. “He had to leave in Year 10, he was bullied so much,” she said.

She and her husband said they were surprised but overjoyed when the Irish voted overwhelmingly for marriage equality.

Stuart Garske was not surprised. He said politicians “pander to the loudest minority”. He does not feel it should be the subject of a referendum, although his parents do.

“It’s not about the word ‘marriage’ or ‘gay marriage’; it is about equality or discrimination against one group of people,” he said.

“It is not an issue to be debated — strip away the emotion and it is discrimination, which does not need a vote, just a politician to show some leadership. It is straight people with opinions talking about gay people as if they are not part of this community at all.”

His father said it was time to stop the talk. “We need action now,” he said.

Mitchell Federal MP Alex Hawke said he is opposed to changes to the Marriage Act but said there should be a conscience vote on the subject.

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Report: QandGay Special Screening June 18th, ABC Studios Ultimo

PFLAG members were part of the audience for this unusual session. Susana, her daughter Vanessa, Jean-Pierre and I went in together and were sitting together in the front section. Some people recognised JP from his black beret!

There were other PFLAG members present – Michelle Lancey, Les Mico, Geoff Thomas and his wife Sandra plus their friend Leola, Lois Rolfe and her son Adam, Faye and Mark Leveson. There may have been other members we didn't see. The first question was asked by 'Margaret' the mother of a gay son. None of our PFLAG questions was chosen.

Tom Ballard was excellent as compère. In fact, there were several people tweeting: "Move over Tony Jones!"

The panel was made up of:

- Gay rights activist, author and academic DENNIS ALTMAN
- Entertainer PAUL CAPSIS
- Broadcaster, journalist and Christian Julie McCrossin
- President, Christian Democrat Party Rev. Fred Nile
- Transgender woman Julia Doulman
- Student and queer activist Katherine Hudson

We personally felt flat and disappointed after the event. We thought perhaps the questions were not very well-chosen. Fred Nile and his followers were given far more air time than their narrow views merit. For example, several people (in particular Maeve Marsden and Paul Capsis) gave quite emotional and brave descriptions of their lives, and Fred Nile simply dismissed them as if they had not spoken, repeating ad nauseam his views that men and women 'go together' and that same-sex couples don't/can't, and that God will love homosexuals if they repent and don't have sex. Some of his views are not only narrow, but quite incorrect. I was disappointed that no-one challenged him when he said marriage has always been between a man and a woman in every country in the world. Those who have researched this say that is simply not so. We had all been cautioned several times before the show to be respectful, so there was little audible response to Fred's many outrageous, outdated claims.

Julie McCrossin was the standout voice of reason. She embraced us warmly after the show, and we have exchanged emails since. She said she 'wants it all' (legal AND religious marriage) as she had cancer two years ago, and is out of patience. Denis Altman was good too. We loved Paul Capsis' song at the end.

I felt that another problem was that they tried to cover too much. Gay and Lesbian, Transgender, same-sex marriage, bringing up children in gay families, ethnicity and sexuality, drag queens etc. all have distinctly individual needs to be discussed. However, on talking to people since Thursday, it seems that it was certainly an initial eye-opener for those who have had no experience with that 'world,' and let's hope it sparks people's interest to learn more.

The show seems to have created a great deal of interest, both online and in the press. Fred McConnell (The Guardian,) Neil McMahon (SMH) and Maeve Marsden (Daily Life) have all written interesting articles in the last week.

All in all, we were very glad to have been part of the evening, and appreciated seeing 'Between a Frock and a Hard Place' before the Q and A. Thank you PFLAG for allowing us to represent our group.

Gillian and Jean-Pierre Maury, 24th June 2015

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Special Event: Safe Schools Coalition: 30th July, Sydney University

The 2015 National Safe Schools Symposium is an exciting gathering of young people, educators and supporters who are passionate about creating safe and inclusive school communities, where every same sex attracted, intersex and gender diverse student, teacher and family can belong.

Join us to celebrate the program's success to date, share experiences and ideas and gain the skills and knowledge to create positive school environments.

The invitation is attached to the email via which you received this newsletter. RSVP details included.

Lush Cosmetics: Supporters of Equality

LUSH Cosmetics is a long-time supporter of equal rights for LGBT people (among their many wonderful values and campaigns!). Worldwide, LUSH is focusing attention on the discrimination and violence to which LGBT people are subjected.

<https://www.lush.com.au/shop/info/137/>

Here in Australia, LUSH supports marriage equality; partnering with Australian Marriage Equality in 2012. Our President, Judy Brown, was recently invited to speak about PFLAG to the Macquarie Centre LUSH store staff.

PFLAG thanks LUSH for their ongoing commitment to equal and fair treatment of our LGBT friends and loved ones. Please support LUSH when you need to buy a fabulous gift (or something for yourself).

Book Release: OK2BG

We have received a media kit from Jack Dunsmoor for his book, OK2BG. Jack compiled this book and the accompanying quizzes and resources in response to the growing number of gay teen suicides. The book is available globally online from July 2015, in both paperback and e-Book versions.

Jack's press release says:

"OK2BG by Jack Dunsmoor is narrative nonfiction & an insightful story in Memoir format about a guy who candidly attempts to help kids at-risk; together with a comprehensive list of biographies about bold men who had the tenacity to express themselves, deliberately intended for students & school libraries".

Paperback available from Lulu.com

E-books available from: ePub & pdf (<1MB) @ [Lulu](#), Apple iPad @ [iBookstore](#), Barnes & Noble [Nook](#) Amazon, Kindle, Kobo.

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Upcoming Events

Catholic Acceptance Trivia Night: 8th August

Saturday, August 08, 2015. Doors open 7pm, start 7.30pm.
St Joseph's Church Crypt, Newtown NSW

The Acceptance Trivia Night theme this year is "Celebrating Australiana" (fancy dress).

The night will be great fun, with prizes for best dressed Australian Theme and best Australian table decoration.

There are raffles to be won and the opportunity to get up and dance!

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

This event is BYO Food and drinks.

COST: \$25 (non Acceptance Sydney member) and \$20 for Acceptance Members.

For more information please email: info@gaycatholic.com.au

Parramatta Pride Picnic, 27th September



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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 – 2015:

- July 25th
- August 22nd
- September 26th
- October 24th
- November 28th
- December: TBA

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