



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

**May 2015 Newsletter VOLUME 18 – ISSUE 4**

PFLAG NSW Inc. (Incorporating Western Sydney) meets on the 4<sup>th</sup> Saturday of every month.

The next meeting will be:

**Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> May 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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In This Issue:

[President's Report](#)

['Our Colours' Anti-Homophobia in Schools](#)

[Youth Suicide Forum: June 2<sup>nd</sup>](#)

[Marriage Equality: Letters to MPs Please: URGENT!](#)

[Irish Marriage Equality Vote: May 22nd](#)

[Upcoming Events](#)

[Regular Announcements](#)

[Dates for Your Diary](#)

[Contacts](#)

## President's Report

*I didn't have another day of maleness in me or I would have committed suicide. It's that simple! The final tipping point was when I turned 56 in 2012 and I thought to myself, 'I'm not going to have another birthday'. I just knew that I could not go on. I couldn't have another birthday as Malcolm McGregor.*" – Royal Australian Air Force Group Captain Catherine McGregor speaking to David Alexander in the May edition of Star Observer.

The fact that high profile people, like Cate McGregor, have come out so publicly in telling their stories, has likely given young people, like Alex Taylor from St Ives and Melbourne's East Bentleigh Primary School student, Oliver, the inspiration to courageously speak out about their experiences with gender dysphoria. We received a phone call from an ABC radio "AM Programme" journalist at 6am on Tuesday, March 31<sup>st</sup>, seeking a comment on the findings of a Beyondblue survey that showed alarmingly high rates of homophobia among young men. My response was that I wondered whether it may have been due to the outspoken derogatory comments made about gay people by leaders in the government and the hierarchy of the mainstream churches, as people in society often form their opinions from those in authority. Pam was also interviewed and spoke about the severe impact that homophobic bullying had had on their son.

Alex Taylor, now 21, was interviewed for the **article in the Sydney Morning Herald** that day about the findings of the survey. He reported that bullying about his gender and sexuality had started in Year 4 and even after changing schools, the intimidation continued. Beyondblue chief executive, Georgie Harman, said young people who experienced discrimination could suffer serious mental health problems. The charity has launched a campaign to raise awareness about homophobic attitudes among young people.

A more heartening story was reported in the SMH of April 30<sup>th</sup>, which revealed how a grade 5 student stood up to make a speech to the entire school at East Bentleigh Primary in Melbourne, disclosing to fellow students that even though he was born Molly, he was actually Ollie, a transgender boy. Oliver also asked to be the school's wellbeing captain the following year, as he knew what it was like to be on the outer. The response had been very positive, with staff crying and telling him they were so proud of him. There wasn't any teasing from the students and he was selected as the wellbeing captain.

About 50% of adolescents with gender dysphoria without support try to self-harm and about 30% try to take their own lives. Over a lifetime, about 50% of transgender people attempt suicide.

It is also reported in the Star Observer that US President, Barack Obama has called for an **end to so-called "conversion therapies"** for same-sex attracted and trans youth, condemning the practice. The statement comes in response to the death of trans 17 year old Leelah Alcorn, who ended her life earlier this year after stating in an online message religious "therapists" had tried to convert her to male. The White House has stated that President Obama will support state-based efforts to ban conversion therapies.

[Back to top](#)

As I write this, it will be the last day as Team Leader of **ACON's Anti-Violence Project** for Robert Knapman, a great friend of PFLAG and a long term campaigner against homophobia. Robert had chaired the Anti- Homophobia Interagency for many years, seeking to affirm diversity and address prejudice related to sex, gender and sexuality in education environments. He was instrumental in setting up the "Our Colours" website, which sought to provide a package of best practice resources on LGBTI issues to all NSW school communities.

See later in newsletter, where our feedback is sought on this website. Robert also was responsible for taking the many supportive photographic representations that were part of the "This is Oz" online campaign against homophobia and always seem to pop up at functions to take photos of all of us to raise awareness of PFLAG. We wish Robert all the best in his future endeavours. He will be sadly missed.

Thanks to Narelle and Pam who addressed the Staff at **Crestwood High School**, Baulkham Hills today, May 7<sup>th</sup>. The invitation was extended to PFLAG by teacher, Stephanie Merriman, who had been part of the Ally Network at Macquarie University and wished to have IDAHO acknowledged at Crestwood this year by offering to support the staff in their understanding of sexual and gender diversity. Narelle reported that they felt very well received and that the staff were very responsive with their questions. Stephanie wrote to express her gratitude saying: *"What Narelle & Pam had to say to the staff at CHS was very relevant, very thought-provoking and very affecting. It was a pleasure having them."*

Thanks to Ron and Ray, who attended **the Morning Tea at ACON** this morning to help them celebrate their Brand 'Refresh'. Thanks also to Ron, who will be speaking with me at a lunchtime session at the Westpac Bank in the city on Monday, May 11<sup>th</sup>. The Westpac Bank employee action group, Global, aims to build a safe and respectful work environment for all LGBTI employees. The theme for their IDAHOT program is "Support", where they are looking to educate and demonstrate the different resources available to support employees and their families.

**Narelle's interview with her son, Neil**, has finally made it to the pages of "Yours" magazine, Issue 33, in a special Mother's Day feature, under the heading "What we learned from our children". Congratulations to Narelle for this wonderful article, which is headed "My son taught me to be more open-minded." It features a delightful photo of Narelle and Neil and provides insightful and inspirational reading for parents, particularly those with children, who are gay.

Thanks to Ruth and Pam, who have been busy, with the **Blue Mountains City Council IDAHOT** committee and the Parramatta Queer Forum meetings respectively, organising the activities for the commemoration of the International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia next week. See details later in newsletter.

We are grateful to Carol for attending a **Marriage Equality Forum at Penrith** on April 10.



Carol reported that there were about 25 in attendance and that speeches were made by National PFLAG Spokesperson, Shelley Argent and PFLAG Capital Region Vice-President, Ivan Hinton with lots of good Q & A. Carol will also attend the Penrith IDAHOT event with family members.

[Back to top](#)

Thank you to Gillian, who attended the screening of the pilot episode of “**Subject to Change**” at **Paddington** on Sunday, April 19<sup>th</sup>. “Subject to Change” is what co-producers, Daniel Mercieca and Rory Delaney hope will be the first Aussie TV drama featuring same-sex attracted teens in lead roles. Gillian said the acting was great and that the series will be fantastic if it gets the promotion it hopes to receive. Thanks also to Gillian for agreeing to represent PFLAG at the **Surry Hills Police Community Engagement Meeting** on Wednesday, May 27<sup>th</sup>.

Thank you to Mollie who has agreed to be part of a small delegation of **Parramatta Queer Forum** members, who will meet with the Lord Mayor of Parramatta late in May.

We very much appreciate the effort that Narelle and Mollie are putting in to put together a chronicle of **PFLAG’s history in Australia** and particularly NSW, largely taken from the many detailed emails that have been kindly forwarded to us by Heather Horntvedt from WA. It is great that the present PFLAG members and others will learn of our history and also that it can be archived for future generations

Congratulations to Les for his well -researched, insightful input into a submission sent to Bishop Eugene Hurley in Darwin, with the hope of inclusion with his submission to the Synod in Rome. This is part of the review **on Acceptance of the Marginalised**, but, in particular re Marriage.

Thank you to all the members who came along to support the new families at our **March 28<sup>th</sup> Family Meeting** and to Mollie, who facilitated the meeting so well for us. We have been very busy with calls and emails from new parents over the last week, particularly from Mums with very young children, who encouragingly have exhibited loving acceptance of their children.

**Helen Robertson, PFLAG Coordinator, Central Coast**, writes: On Sunday 12 April PFLAG Central Coast attended GOATS Day (Going off at the Swamp) which is both a music festival and a National Youth Week event which has been running for 17 years at San Remo (between Doyalson & Budgewoi). In the early days of the festival Shelagh Zincke ran the PFLAG stall representing the whole of the Hunter and Central Coast region. In 2011 Hunter and Central Coast started separate groups and we have been learning about running a stall since then. Last year we received a grant from Wyong Council for our banner however that day was rained out. This year was our best effort with no rain and an estimated 11,000 visitors to the event so we had plenty of people come and talk to us at our stall about the work that PFLAG does. We met 2 mums with older sons who saw the stall and had a chat, one from Sydney who was up this way visiting family. The other three mums who helped on the stall had a good time, all 4 of us have university students now - three at Newcastle Uni and one at UNSW so there was much to talk about. Thanks to PFLAG NSW for supporting our efforts.

I hope you’ll be able to come along to our Family Meeting on May 23<sup>rd</sup>, for as Rudy always says: “*When you don’t need PFLAG anymore, that’s when PFLAG needs **You** to help others!*” **Judy**

[Back to top](#)

## **‘Our Colours’: Anti-Homophobia in School Communities**

The NSW Anti-Homophobia Interagency (AHI) is looking for feedback on an exciting new website called ‘Our Colours’ aimed at school communities (students, teachers, parents and families). The AHI works to affirm diversity and address prejudice related to gender, sexuality and intersex variations in education environments. We recognise that school communities want easy access to high quality and up to date information on these issues and ‘Our Colours’ has been designed to offer this.

AHI is currently focus testing this website and is looking for feedback from our target audiences to help make the site the best it can be. Based on this feedback we’ll then make changes to the site before it’s launched.

We are asking parents/caregivers/family members, young people/school students, and teachers to tell us what they think about the site so far.

Could you please circulate to your networks and anyone you think might be interested in completing our survey.

**We’re keen to get initial feedback by 15 May.**

Link to the survey: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/X6CDRDG>

Link to the website: <http://ourcolours.org.au/>

If you have any questions please let me know please contact Terence Humphries at Twenty10 at [terence@twenty10.org.au](mailto:terence@twenty10.org.au) or (02) 8594 9562.

**Robert Knapman**

**Team Leader**

**ACON’s Anti-Violence Project**

[Back to top](#)

## Youth Suicide Forum: June 2<sup>nd</sup>

Sydney University, in conjunction with Beyond Blue, is hosting a public forum on the issue of youth suicide.

Young gay and lesbian people still face appalling discrimination and homophobia, as the recent Beyond Blue survey showed. PFLAG Sydney members are encouraged to attend the forum and speak out about why LGBTIQ people are at risk.

**Date:** Tuesday 2 June

**Time:** 6.30 - 8.30pm

**Venue:** Seymour Centre

Cnr of Cleveland St and City Rds

Chippendale NSW

**Cost:** Free event, with registration required.

[http://sydney.edu.au/sydney\\_ideas/lectures/2015/sunday\\_telegraph\\_youth\\_mental\\_health.shtml](http://sydney.edu.au/sydney_ideas/lectures/2015/sunday_telegraph_youth_mental_health.shtml)

## Marriage Equality: Letters to MPs required Urgently!

Marriage Equality supporters are all too familiar with emailing Federal MPs to express support for equality, only to hear that MP state that they have “not received communication from the electorate in favour of same-sex marriage”.

Shelley Argent will be in Canberra soon with Rodney Croome, Australian Marriage Equality and Reverend Dr Peter Catt, Anglican Dean of Brisbane.

She is seeking letters from marriage equality supporters, explaining why this issue is important to our friends and families. Shelley explains that letters in hand are harder to ignore than emails.

A guide to writing letters is attached with this newsletter. Please email Shelley with your letter **addressed to your Federal MP by 27<sup>th</sup> May**. Send letters to: [pflagbris@bigpond.com](mailto:pflagbris@bigpond.com)

## Irish Marriage Equality Vote: 22<sup>nd</sup> May

Have you family and / or friends in Ireland eligible to vote in the upcoming Irish Referendum on Marriage Equality?

Please help make Ireland the latest country to extend equality to the LGBTI community. Ask your family and friends to vote yes!

<http://www.irishecho.com.au/2015/05/11/irish-in-australia-join-push-for-yes-vote/34419>

[Back to top](#)

## Upcoming Events

### IDAHOT: Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> May

#### Penrith City Council:

**11am – 3pm** Picnic in the Park - Regatta Park, River Road, Emu Plains.

Details: [dayagainsthomophobia.org](http://dayagainsthomophobia.org)

*The International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia (IDAHOT)* will boldly SHINE A LIGHT on the message that there is no place in Western Sydney for **homophobia or transphobia**.

If you would like more information about this topic, please contact Sue Palmer at 0411 330 212 or email at [pastorsue@theopendoor.org.au](mailto:pastorsue@theopendoor.org.au)

#### Blue Mountains City Council:

**11am – 11.30am** Rainbow Flag Raising – Blue Mountains City Council

**11.30am – 1pm** Carrington Square (wet weather venue: Katoomba Community Hall – the old library)

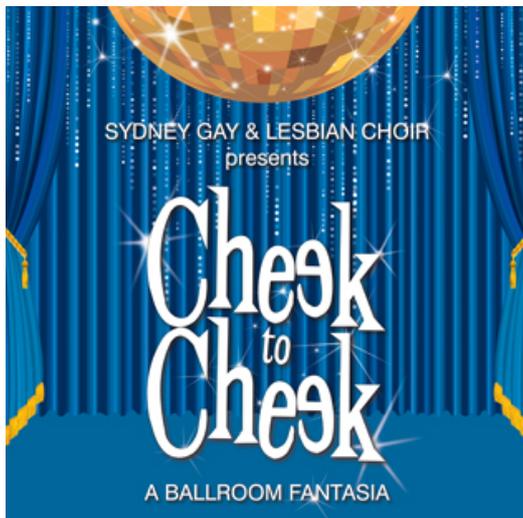
### Sydney Gay and Lesbian Choir: 'Cheek to Cheek'

Sat 20<sup>th</sup> June & Sun 21<sup>st</sup> June

**Times:** Saturday 20 June, 3pm and 8pm.

Sunday 21 June, 2pm. 2015

**Venue:** The Roundhouse, UNSW, Anzac Parade Kensington



Sydney Gay & Lesbian Choir, Sydney's vibrant same-sex ballroom dance community and some of our city's brightest music theatre stars present a dazzling song and dance spectacular. **CHEEK TO CHEEK: A Ballroom Fantasia** is a queer Cinderella tale with a message that anyone can go to the ball.

Buy tickets here:

<http://www.eventopia.co/profile/UNSW-Roundhouse/1820631>

[Back to top](#)

## Stella Does Bingo

**Fundraiser for MCC Good Shepherd Western Sydney Inc.**

**Friday May 29th 2015, 7pm Sharp.**

***PFLAG will have a table ~ if you wish to join us, please contact Narelle on (02) 9874 3624.***

## 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](http://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:

- May 23<sup>rd</sup>
- June 27<sup>th</sup>: Guest Speaker: Erin Gough (Author: The Flywheel)

[Back to top](#)

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**PFLAG Blue Mountains:** Ruth & Ron Green 02 4757 4864

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

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