



(PFLAG NSW - Incorporating Western Sydney)

May 2016
Volume 19, Issue 4

PFLAG NSW Inc. (Incorporating Western Sydney) meets:
2pm on the **4th Saturday** of every month

at:

Wesley Conference Room
Wesley Lodge
Cnr. Hawkesbury Rd & Queens Rd
Westmead

Opposite Westmead Hospital and a 5 minute walk from Westmead train station. Parking on site, entry via boom gate on Hawkesbury Rd

Next Family Meeting:
May 28th, 2016

For Information contact: Judy on (02) 9869 1454 or Natalie on 0406 124 239

Postal Address: PO Box 3751, Marsfield NSW 2122.

Email: jr_brown@bigpond.net.au or ncooper101@gmail.com

President's Report

“The coming out process can be challenging in any culture and South Asian families face their own unique challenges”. – Bianca Soldani, SBS, 26/04/16. When Vijay Agarwal’s son, Rishi, confronted him about his sexuality in 2004, he said: ***“Dad, you have two choices, either you can accept me or you can disown me.”*** Vijay replied: ***“Son, disowning is not one of the choices. I have to educate myself before I can tell you what I think.”*** His wife’s response was a more emotional one: ***“I was just speechless and heartbroken. I was going through such hell in my head, god knows how life is going to be, what is he going to do – all those thoughts.”*** Vijay and his wife, Sushma, set about researching what it meant to be gay and joined a PFLAG group in Toronto. Twelve years on, their son is happily married, with Vijay and Sushma insisting he and his husband be given a traditional Hindu wedding, despite seven priests declining to officiate. Now they are taking the support they received from PFLAG back to their hometown of Oakville, Canada and to others in the South Asian community. Many of you would have read this story on our PFLAG Sydney Facebook page, but I felt it was such a wonderful demonstration of the power of love and one to which many new parents would be able to relate.

Rainbow Families hosted the first ever International Family Equality Day in partnership with the City of Sydney, NSW Police and Australian Marriage Equality on Sunday, May 1 in Sydney Park. Thanks to Vanessa Gonzalez, who requested a speaker from PFLAG for the day and thanks to Gillian, who was very well-received, when she delivered her speech on behalf of PFLAG. Gillian was photographed with local MPs Tanya Plibersek, Anthony Albanese and Jo Haylen and with Elaine Czulkowski from AME and Tiernan Brady, who ran the successful Marriage Equality campaign in Ireland. Tanya Plibersek remarked on one of the T-shirts worn on the day that displayed the caption: ***“Love makes a family”***. By all reports, it was a fabulously fun day and they can’t wait for the next one.

I was fortunate to be able to attend the launch of the Gayby Baby School Action Toolkit on Thursday, May 12 at the Teachers Federation Building in Surry Hills. The 2015 Gayby Baby documentary was directed by Maya Newell and produced by Charlotte Mars. It follows the stories of Gus, Ebony, Matt & Graham, four children navigating the usual challenges of growing up within loving homes and with caring parents – who all happen to be gay or lesbian. The School Action Toolkit is linked to the Health and Physical Education learning area of the Australian Curriculum for Years 5 – 6. It provides strategies to support students being raised in non-traditional family units with same-sex attracted parents, single parents, co-parents, and in adoptive or step family units. The launch was very well attended by executive, staff and students from a number of schools, representatives from the Federation of P & C organisations, NSW Police and from many of the LGBTI organisations. The Federal Member for Sydney, Tanya Plibersek and the State Members for Sydney and Newtown, Alex Greenwich and Jenny Leong were all guest speakers, as they had been supporters of the film and the toolkit. The subject children of the film were represented with their families and Ebony, now quite grown up, gave an inspiring speech. Maya reported that since launching the toolkit online the previous morning, 150 schools had come on board. It can be downloaded free at www.thegaybyproject.com/schools.

Thanks to Pam, who responded to Hills News' journalist, Niki Burnside, when she posed the question: ***"Do you think we need the 'Safe Schools' initiative in the Hills?"*** Niki had written an article on March 24 remarking that none of the schools in the Hills had signed on to the "Safe Schools Coalition" program. After her response, Niki contacted Pam and asked if she could interview a few of the PFLAG committee members. Pam kindly offered her home as a meeting place and Narelle, Ray and I went along to be interviewed with Pam re our thoughts on the benefits of having the "Safe Schools" program. The story headed: ***"We do need Safe Schools"*** went to print on April 20. The article began with our report that calls from distressed parents had risen markedly since the Safe Schools debate began. Pam is reported as saying: ***"She is concerned the debate about the controversial Safe Schools program – which provides resources and information for teachers and students – and a proposed plebiscite on marriage equality could put people at risk...this program, if it had been around all those years ago, could have changed our lives significantly.*** Ray is quoted as saying: ***"We just want our children to be safe and if the negative comments made by some politicians continue there's going to be more calls of distress."***

Our National Spokesperson, Shelley Argent, took out a ¼ page advertisement in "The Australian" newspaper on Friday, May 6, urging the Prime Minister, Mr. Turnbull to grant a free vote on Marriage Equality, rather than a plebiscite, as the leader of the opposition, Mr. Shorten has pledged. Shelley says: ***"Mr. Shorten recognises marriage equality will provide emotional stability, economic, legal and civil rights for the couples and their loved ones. Our sons and daughters in same sex relationships don't want special rights Mr. Turnbull, they just want equality."***

Our Northside contact, Maree Lau, has made a beautiful video, in support of Marriage Equality, which can be viewed on the PFLAG Sydney Facebook page. Maree talks about the difficulties that she faced 40 years ago, when she announced that she was to marry a man of Chinese background. Just as same sex marriages are controversial now, so were inter-racial marriages 40 years ago. Maree knows that people, who made negative comments on her inter-racial marriage back then, would now regret what they had said, so she urges people to think about their attitude and asks: ***"Will you regret what you are saying today?"***

The Attorney-General, George Brandis, has ruled out suspending anti-discrimination laws during the Same Sex Marriage plebiscite campaign. The Australian Christian Lobby had called for the Federal Government to override laws that prohibit discrimination.

Thanks to Narelle and Ray for speaking on behalf of PFLAG at the GLLO (Gay and Lesbian Liaison Officer) training conference at the NSW Police Day St. City LAC on Wednesday, May 11. They were both very well received and fielded the most questions.

Ray and I attended the showing of a documentary film "Being Gay and Christian" at Parramatta Town Hall as part of National Youth Week on April 16. The documentary was produced by William Bagatcholon, a young man who is gay and a carer for his disabled brother. It was funded by "My Choice Matters". In the film, William interviews the Hon Michael Kirby and the Rev. Dr Margaret Mayman, who is lesbian and the pastor of the Pitt St. Uniting Church. William had a panel of speakers including two Western Sydney University lecturers, a practitioner from headspace and a local Uniting Church minister, who was lesbian and worked as a hospital chaplain. It was quite an ambitious project and was done in collaboration with Parramatta City Council.

Tuesday, May 17 marked IDAHOT Day (International Day against homophobia and transphobia). Thanks to Pam and Arthur, who were on the stall outside the Parramatta Town Hall from 11.30 – 2pm distributing flyers and helping raise awareness. This is the first year that Parramatta City Council has agreed to raise the Rainbow Flag in commemoration of IDAHOT day. Thanks to Carol, who represented PFLAG at the IDAHOT festivities at Regatta Park, Emu Plains on Saturday, May 14 from 11am – 4pm. This shone a light on Mental Health Awareness in the LGBTI community by providing lots of entertainment and games for all the family. Thank you to Ruth, who, as part of the Blue Mountains organising committee, took part in the Rainbow Flag Raising at the Blue Mountains City Council on May 17 and then joined in the IDAHOT events at Carrington Square Katoomba on Saturday, May 21, from 11am – 1pm. I hosted a stall at Macquarie University on May 17 from 12 – 2pm.

Thank you to Carol and Geoff for again offering to represent PFLAG in speaking to Colo High Year 11 students, as part of their Crossroads program at North Richmond Panthers Club on Thursday, May 26.

PFLAG member and regular meeting attendee, Fr Stephen Robinson, has advised us of a Liturgy of Thanksgiving for the 15th Anniversary of his Ecumenical Catholic Church, to be held on Sunday, June 12 @ 2pm at the Historic Church, cnr of 221 Old Northern Rd. and Francis St. Castle Hill. Light refreshments will be served afterwards. Contact Fr Stephen on 0414 194 940 if you'd like to attend. Congratulations to Fr Stephen, who celebrated 39 years of priestly ordination on May 13.

I'd like to thank everyone who came along to support all the new family members at our April Family meeting and thanks to Mollie, who facilitated the meeting so well. I hope to see many of you at our meeting on May 28, for, as Rudy always said: *"When you don't need PFLAG anymore, that's when PFLAG needs **YOU** to help others."*

Judy

IDAHOT May 17, 2017 – *International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia*

IDAHOT in the Blue Mountains



Ruth Green attended the rainbow flag raising at Blue Mountains City Council on IDAHOT day. Representatives from Pink Mountains, Marriage Equality, Blue Mountains family support, Mountains Outreach Service, Local and Federal government representatives, Local indigenous representatives and members of the community attended. The rainbow flag will fly at council and Echo Point Katoomba will fly for one week to commemorate IDAHOT.

Ruth (our PFLAG REP) is in the middle front row with sunglasses on



IDAHOT at Emu Plains

Carol reports:

The day was beautiful weather-wise, with a good number of stalls, including ACON; Marriage Equality; Relationships Australia; and Rainbow Babies & Kids.

Sue Palmer, the Open Door Pastor, thanked me for being there, saying it was important to have PFLAG represented.

Safe Schools Rally, Sydney Town Hall, May 20



Thank you to Gillian who represented PFLAG NSW at the Safe Schools rally on May 20th.

Advocates of the program suggest Safe Schools is a valuable and much-needed resource to protect vulnerable LGBTI students.

“So many people from our community would still be with us today had the Safe Schools program been available 10, 20 and even 30 years ago. It is saving young lives,” write CAAH (Community Action Against Homophobia).

“We can't go back to how things were when the system turned a blind eye to those of us that are 'different'. When the needs of our most vulnerable were not included in curriculum and a time when teachers were unable to gain access and support for them to work with students who fell into a minority.”

Gillian is pictured here with James Argent at the rally.

<http://gaynewsnetwork.com.au/news/national/hands-off-safe-schools-show-your-support-at-the-chalking-or-rally-20625.html>

Upcoming Events

Save the Date – Sunday 30th October

PARRAMATTA PRIDE PICNIC!

Pride Picnic returns to River Foreshore Playground, Parramatta

Further details to follow in coming months....



Rainbow Babies and Kids – Early Notice!

Camping events

Kiama, 7th – 9th November

<http://rainbowbabiesandkids.blogspot.com.au/p/events.html>