GRAI Matters

Summer 2014/15

GRAI at PrideFest 2014

LGBTI Housing Feature

Social Connections and why they matter

Q Connect - Linking Generations

Reports, Theses and a whole lot more...
Welcome to our final GRAI newsletter of the year. Although I had thought things would slow down in December, no such luck, and we find ourselves scrambling to the end-of-year finish line, only just sustained by the anticipation of an imminent holiday!

2014 has certainly been a very productive 12 months for GRAI, with a huge focus on our ‘Right To Belong’ Aged Care training, as well as other conferences and social and informational events for our community. In the past couple of months we have held a community workshop in the City of Vincent (Safe Spaces for LGBTI Elders), started a new ‘Lesbians who Lunch’ club (page 6), and participated in November’s PrideFest, enjoying the opportunities to mingle at GRAIs Community Breakfast in Russell Square and Sundowner at the Urban Orchard and taking to the streets for Pride Parade (page 2)

2015 promises to be another big year, starting with GRAI’s 10th Anniversary on 22 February and a very special fundraiser with Justice Michael Kirby on 26 March. Mark both dates on your new calendar! Also in the first quarter, we are holding a couple of information sessions for the LGBTI community on ‘Planning for Your Future’ (see page 22)

This is a bumper edition of our newsletter in the hope that you will have plenty of time to savour it!

The GRAI Board have been magnificent in supporting the work of our organisation, and we have also been sustained by our loyal members and supporters who understand the significance of this work to create spaces where older LGBTI people can live fully and thrive.

We thank you all, and send our very warmest wishes for happiness in your homes and a spring in your step as you join us again in 2015 for more adventures celebrating older and bolder LGBTI lives.

June Lowe, Chair
GRAI loves Pride and the opportunity this festival gives for us to celebrate, consolidate, redefine, and generally give meaning to the nebulous term ‘community’. Over the years there has been much soul-searching, navel-gazing, finger-pointing and teeth gnashing regarding the future of Pride in Perth. However, the recent consultations by the Pride Committee have given the organisation renewed impetus and direction.

This year’s PrideFest theme ‘Reflect, Renew, Rejoice’ not only perfectly embodied this process, but was also an ideal fit for GRAI as we celebrate older LGBTI people and their contributions both in the past and in the present, inspiring newer arrivals on the scene.

We hosted a Community Breakfast in Russell Square (15 November) and a Sundowner at the Urban Orchard (21 November) and finally, we enjoyed the long sashay of Pride Parade, with a prize-winning, classy little walking float. Many thanks to everyone who worked hard to make these activities a success, especially GRAI Board member Dave Nicholson who gained a few grey hairs along the way.
A special thanks to our Parade participants

Beth Cameron,
Ellie Del Cashin,
Leonie Stickland,
Ivan King,
Cettina Raccuai,
Lauren Smith,
Stuart Pekin,
Nessie Donnelly,
June Lowe and
Susanne Hadlow
Thanks to Perth Now and WA Today for featuring GRAI in their pictorial coverage of the Parade.
Importance of social connection for older LGBTI folk

A recently published paper reports on a small study which explored the impacts of homophobia on the lives of older lesbian and gay Australians. The research was supported by beyondblue (see below for link to full report). Eleven in-depth interviews were conducted with older lesbians (6) and gay men (5) ranging in age from 65 to 79 years. Approximately half the interviews were undertaken in Perth.

Key findings from the research revolved around reports of the impact of LGBT people of living at a time when the dominant medical, legal and religious institutions of their youth defined them as sick, immoral or criminal. Many had experienced enforced ‘cure’ therapies, or were imprisoned, had employment terminated or were disowned and disinherited by family due to the sexual identity.

Their social connections and social networks played a critical role in sustaining most of the participants, and emerged as an important protective response to mitigate against the extremely negative situation in which they were living. Although informally based, most of these networks formed obviously deep connections. Partners too played an important part. However if partners became caregivers, it was found that this role was often undertaken at times beyond their capacity and at cost to their relationship.

With increasing age, many participants reported returning to feelings of insecurity with loss of independence and the reliance on health/social services. There was a stated fear of institutional control and a need to ‘straighten up’ or hide their sexuality.

A number of recommendations were made by the study authors including the need for robust LGBTI-inclusive policy by service providers and systematic education for all mental health and aged/community care staff. Service providers needed to accept their responsibilities in this area and not expect individual LGBTI clients to have to demand this. The importance of increased support for further research and especially in the area of older trans and intersex people was also noted.

Research such as this is important to give voice to a group of older people who are often hidden. It also affirms the need for GRAI’s work and underscores the importance of undertaking activities that can increase social connection.

- Dr Jude Comfort

References:


Lesbians Who Lunch

“I used to wonder where all the older lesbians were, and now here we are!” (Gaie Farnham)

Lesbians Who Lunch, the new monthly lunch club for older lesbians, had its inaugural meeting in November in a delightful Mt Hawthorne garden cafe, and lunched again in December in the shady grounds of historic Tranby House in Maylands.

The giant jarrah trees on the Maylands peninsula provided welcome respite from the heat and the river slid serenely by as conversations ranged far and wide and everyday stresses seemed far away. Despite Perth’s reputation as ‘a small place’, women previously unknown to each other have come along, as well as old acquaintances renewed. The lunch club has the uncomplicated aim of being a drop in spot for older lesbians looking to maintain or renew their networks. Word is getting around and the Lesbians Who Lunch mailing list is growing!

If you are interested in our January lunch (Floreat Beach Kiosk, 22 January) please RSVP – this critical for us to book a big enough table.
This new report examines the health and well being of LGBTI elders in NSW, and gives an important snapshot of their health concerns, activities they would like to be engaged in and their preferred social connections.

Authors Assoc Professor Mark Hughes of Southern Cross University and Sujay Kentlyn of Evergreen Life Care, conducted an extensive survey with 312 people over 50, nearly 60% of whom lived in Sydney while the rest were from regional or rural areas.

Although the majority (57.8%) were on good terms with their biological family, 12.5% had mixed experiences, 12.1% were estranged and 17.6% were distant due to other factors (location or disability). 46.2% lived with their partner and 40% lived on their own, with mental health issues more likely to be experienced by those living alone and by carers.

Participants identifying as female were more likely to report lower levels of physical health than others, which was felt to reflect other research showing lesbians were at greater risk of some health issues such as obesity and alcohol use. Those aged over 65 reported more concerns about physical activity and had fewer concerns about mental health issues such as anxiety and depression, whereas the reverse was true for those in the 50-54 age bracket. Fear of discrimination, or actual experience of discrimination, acted as a barrier to accessing health services for about half of the survey respondents.

The report draws some correlations between preferences for different health promoting activities and health/age factors. Fitness groups and walking groups were more popular with younger members, swimming and walking more popular with those identifying as female, weight loss groups more likely to be selected by those with more psychological distress while there was a preference for art/crafts groups amongst those experiencing more loneliness.

In terms of company within the activity, 52% of those identifying as female preferred women-only activities, 33% of those identifying as male wanted to be involved in men-only activities, and nearly 50% wanted to join activities with other LGBTI people.

Other areas of concern were the need for LGBTI-friendly residential care and retirement villages; the prevalence of hetero-normativity (the assumption that everyone is heterosexual); the likelihood of discrimination and the need for staff training. Some reflected on ageism within LGBTI communities, and many advocated for LGBTI ageing to be better acknowledged within society.

Sue Westwood: Ageing, Gender and Sexuality: Equality in Later Life (Thesis)

In her new thesis, Dr Sue Westwood (Uni of Surrey) looks at the intersections of ageing, gender and sexuality, and explores how these influence (in)equalities for older people of diverse sexualities. Dr Westwood also introduces an ‘N’ acronym: ‘Non-labelling individuals in same-gender relationships’ which is especially pertinent for a generation who may not have identified with any of our contemporary labels or signifiers.

Dr Westwood employs a 5-cohort model to describe the diversity of older LGBN identities: Out Early, Breaking Out, Finding Out, Late Performance, and Lesbians by Choice. The ‘Out Early’ cohort comprises lesbians and gay men who “always knew” and always had same-gender sexual relationships. ‘Breaking Out’, comprises people who “always knew” but struggled with this awareness before reaching a resolution. The ‘Finding Out’ cohort is described as retrospectively realising their LGB identity after a heterosexual identification, while ‘Late Performers’ are those who identify and ‘perform’ as heterosexual people for the majority of their lives, then in later life enter same-gender sexual relationships. ‘Late Performers’ may be ambivalent about taking on a sexuality label. The fifth cohort, ‘Lesbians by Choice’ describes women who ‘gave up’ men as an expression of resistance to patriarchy.

Many of us are relatively familiar with this broad spectrum of LGB identities and generally have become accepting of this diversity within our community. Gone are the days where you could be described as ‘not a real lesbian’ for having been previously married! However when we are describing potential LGBTI clients to the aged care sector, this framework will be most valuable, as (heterosexual) participants are often quite bemused by the complexity of these identity/sexuality journeys.

Anticipated care needs

Future care needs and housing emerged as key areas of concern in Dr Westwood’s thesis, echoing the research of Hughes and Kentlyn, reviewed above. Participants were concerned about who might co-occupy and co-produce the spaces in which they might find themselves in the future, were concerned about marginalisation of older LGBN people, particularly in end-of-life care, hetero-normativity, and risky recognition and the need to conceal their identities. Most men said they would prefer ‘LGBT friendly’ mainstream service provision, whereas the majority of women preferred women-only or lesbian-only provision. Concerns were raised about losing connection with personal communities in older age care spaces – a point that should be well noted by service providers everywhere as an important protective factor for LGBTI older people.

To read the Dissertation Summary or full thesis, go to www.grai.org.au

LGBTI and Ageing Online Resources

The Northern Rivers Social Development Council (NRSDC) in NSW, has recently produced a useful online resource for people interested in LGBTI ageing. It contains links to over 60 videos including short training videos from Australia, UK and US; TV productions, My Transsexual Summer (Channel 4) and Call me Cate (ABC Australian Story); and movies ‘XXXX’, ‘Both’, and ‘West and Proud’, as well as 13 movie trailers and an impressive list of documents and web-site links. We recommend you browse this resource – you never know what you will find!

www.nrsdc.org.au
City of Vincent ‘Safe Space for LGBTI Elders’

22 October 2014, City of Vincent Offices: GRAI took up the offer from the City of Vincent to hold a session at one of the City’s monthly Seniors Info sessions. Titled ‘Safe Space for LGBTI Elders’, the event attracted nearly 20 people, mostly older gay men and lesbians, although a handful of straight ‘regulars’ to these sessions also attended, which added an interesting dimension as these participants learned a lot about the ongoing discrimination and fears of older LGBTI people!

Jude Comfort presented a most engaging workshop, leading discussion exploring elements that would make the City of Vincent (or anywhere) an inclusive place for our community.

Many of the concerns were not LGBTI-specific, but echoed the need for aged-friendly communities, such as better transport, wheelchair accessibility, increased street side seating and gazebos for opportunistic meetings. Ideas for increasing the visibility and awareness of LGBTI elders included encouraging the City of Vincent to include images of lesbian/gay elders in their promotional material; providing LGBTI safe meeting spaces where people could feel safe ‘to be themselves’; and an awards scheme for LGBTI inclusive businesses.

The issue of housing options was probably the hottest topic, with a range of views being presented, from a ‘gay retirement village’, to dividing larger homes for co-housing, and ‘co-location’, i.e. encouraging certain precincts to be particularly attractive to LGBTI people. This last idea was controversial, with others not wanting to see a ‘gay ghetto’ approach. Clearly, housing and supportive community will be topics that need further exploration, as they are so critical in underpinning our sense of safety and well being.

GRAI thanks the City of Vincent for its interest and support and looks forward to an ongoing relationship, as well as to developing similar connections with other local authorities, to look at ways of ensuring older LGBTI people can enjoy a welcoming environment in their locality.
Why a younger person is interested in GRAI

I work on the belief that engaging the other, whatever that may be, is paramount to achieving change. Looking back at the great civil rights movements in history, the moment of accomplishment is achieved when we see the involvement of people who have nothing obvious to gain.

I am often asked why, as a 21 year old, I sit on the board of GRAI. The more cynical wonder whether I care. The truth is that I do – and not just because I’m aspirationally old.

The work that GRAI undertakes informs and benefits the aged care sector, and that is important. It is important for the sector to understand the needs of their consumers, and also for the LGBTI community to realise that not everyone is a young, hot thing and that ageing will come to us all.

Most important, at least for me, are the benefits that will flow to the community-at-large from understanding the issues that GRAI deals with, because we can only achieve an inclusive and vibrant society when we all feel comfortable.

Lastly, the stories about LGBTI people in the aged care sector being out of sight, and definitely out of mind, are deeply troubling. Being an aged care consumer might be a while away for me, but I think that our final days should be lived with dignity and respect. GRAI is achieving this, step by step.

- Conrad Liveris, GRAI Board Member

Equal Opportunities Commissioner visits Perth

Tim Wilson, Commissioner of the Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC), recently visited Perth, and on the 14th October, Living Proud LGBTI Community Services of WA hosted a meeting of other LGBTI organisations to meet with the Commissioner to discuss human rights issues facing our community. GRAI Board member Conrad Liveris made a presentation on behalf of GRAI and underscored the problems that arise due to the lack of visibility of LGBTI elders and their traditional reluctance to make complaints due to their low expectations of remedial responses.

GRAI has concerns about the following issues:

• The need to extend law reform to protect the rights of LGBTI staff working in faith-based aged care organisations. The 2013 Federal anti-discrimination measures only covered clients, not staff;
• Although LGBTI elders have been given ‘Special Needs’ status under the Aged Care Act, no measures of LGBTI inclusivity in policy or practice have been established;
• Aged Care Assessment Teams (ACAT) have no guidelines to check for LGBTI inclusivity; and
• Funding for LGBTI Packages are being awarded to aged care organisations with no formal criteria to indicate LGBTI cultural safety credentials within that organisation.

GRAI looks forward to future work with the AHRC to further address LGBTI elders’ Human Rights issues.
Seniors’ Housing Security in WA

On the 10th November, Council on The Aged (COTA) launched their commissioned research paper on seniors’ housing needs in WA and relevant legislation. Lead researcher, Eileen Webb, from UWA’s Faculty of Law, presented her team’s findings in their paper, Security of tenure for the ageing Western Australian population: Does current housing legislation in Western Australia support Seniors’ on-going housing needs?

Seniors often experience a high level of vulnerability regarding housing, and security of tenure is especially important for them. There is less variety of suitable and suitably located accommodation, and should seniors’ assets be lost for whatever reason, they are unable to rebuild or recoup their losses.

The research ascertained that people are likely to pass through several housing forms post retirement, and noted that the benefits of stable housing were significant to people’s physical and emotional health. Relocations contributed to loss of networks and social isolation and found there is a core relationship between health costs and housing which have been ignored. Indeed, seniors’ housing needs have been largely overlooked especially as they lack economic power, and the lack of senior-friendly accommodation is creating a ‘perfect storm’.

Webb raised the following concerns:

• EPA and FRAUD – Laws regarding Enduring Powers of Attorney need tightening to protect seniors’ rights and banks need to take greater responsibility if fraud is suspected (a common form of elder abuse).

• STRATA TITLE – There needs to be more education around strata title, and strata title managers often may not have the appropriate skills or personalities. Age-friendly renovations are often voted down for aesthetic reasons.

• RENTAL – Due to dramatic increase in rents, older renters are afraid to ask for renovations or to have things fixed for fear their rents will increase. We could look at European initiatives which protect the rights of older tenants. In Germany and France there are automatic renewals and capped rentals.

• SOCIAL HOUSING – Within social housing, seniors were often fearful of co-residents in the complexes. Evidence of the inappropriate use of 3-strikes policies was found, as well as bullying. There is a need for trained and monitored management.

• RETIREMENT VILLAGES – Living conditions can become untenable if mismanaged. Financial arrangements often make it hard to get out of retirement villages.

• RESIDENTIAL PARKS – There are major problems regarding lack of legal protection for residents in residential parks, who may have invested thousands of dollars in their home but have no legal rights to the land and, in WA, have only rolling periods of tenancy. If asked to move on, residents may have nowhere to move to. A preferable model is Queensland’s open ended terms.

• AGED CARE – can also have problems with security of tenure where a facility closes.

• FAMILY ACCOMMODATION – Some disturbing issues were reported in ‘family accommodation’ arrangements, where an elderly parent moves in with the family (or vice versa) often using elders’ equity on the understanding that this in exchange for care. If something goes wrong in the relationships, and/or the house is sold, elders can be left in a precarious position. The law is very poorly designed to resolve these complex issues, and legislation is urgently needed. Webb suggests making family home sharing a ‘registratable interest’ which appears on the title.

• BOARDERS AND LODGERS – A working party has been reformed by the Dept of Commerce, and legislation is needed to protect tenure.
• HOMELESSNESS – We should forget stereotypes around homelessness. There is an increasing number of older women who are homeless following a marriage break up, have no superannuation and no safety net.

LGBTI Seniors and Housing

Webb et al’s research has a chapter dedicated to LGBTI Seniors and GRAI was pleased to be consulted for input regarding older LGBTI needs.

The report recommended that the 2016 Census collect data on sexual orientation and gender identity and that this information be used in planning appropriate accommodation. Researchers also recommended that input is sought from the LGBTI community regarding their experiences with rental housing and that information sessions be provided by the Dept of Commerce or Seniors Housing Centre, to ensure that landlords, real estate managers and property owners are made aware of their responsibilities under the Equal Opportunities legislation, with training in EO law and awareness of LGBTI issues.

This research was funded by a grant from Lotterywest. A report summary can be found on http://www.cotawa.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Housing-for-older-people-summary.pdf

Webb, E, Avival Friehlich, Pnina Levine, and Ben Travia, 2014, Security of tenure for the ageing population in Western Australia: Does current housing legislation support Seniors’ ongoing housing needs? Uniprint, UWA.

‘Intergenerational’ retirement home

A variety of projects are springing up around the world in moves against the isolating environment of traditional care homes. In Britain a commission recommended that aged housing be incorporated into shopping centres and universities to avoid “care ghettos”.

In Deventer, Holland, there is a new intergenerational project which incorporates student housing within the home. Students pay no rent in exchange for spending at least 30 hours a month just hanging out with the older residents or take them shopping, or pursue mutual interests. Gea Sijpkes, the head of the Humanitas retirement home, said: “It’s important not to isolate the elderly from the outside world.”

To read more on the Deventer project: http://www.ctvnews.ca/health/intergenerational-retirement-home-sees-students-live-alongside-the-elderly-1.2136659#ixzz3Lq4sZK5

Jurrien, 20, shows Anton Groot Koerkamp, 85, how to use a computer at the Humanitas retirement home in Deventer, eastern Netherlands, on Oct. 22, 2014. (AFP / Nicolas Delaunay)
Walk in ‘Drag-queen closets” a feature of US LGBT apartment complex.

Over a dozen federally-backed LGBT-friendly housing projects are found in the US, a trend due in part to more gay Americans being out of the closet, and aware of their rights, while discrimination in housing remains common. The US Dept for Fair Housing and Urban Development (HUD) last year received 150 allegations of housing discrimination based on sexual orientation, and a nationwide study found that heterosexual couples were favoured over gay male couples and lesbian couples 16% of the time.

A new 6-story building (the John C Anderson apartments) recently opened in Philadelphia with 56 units catering for low-income LGBT seniors, many of whom were pioneers of the gay rights movement. Walking frames are a familiar sight in seniors’ housing, but here many are decked out with feather boas or rainbow flags. Here residents can be as flamboyant as they wish, and are finally free from concerns about ‘not fitting in’ – sometimes for the first time in their lives.

The Anderson apartments were the result of lobbying by Mark Segal, an early gay activist involved in the radical Gay Liberation Front in the 1960s. He called the Anderson project “one of the most important things I’ve ever done”. “Many of the pioneers were out fighting for the cause and weren’t able to get jobs with [pension] plans. They lost friends and support networks to Aids. Their families disowned them for being gay”, he said.

Segal’s favourite feature of the apartment complex is the vast walk-in “drag-queen closets” symbolising the community being out in the open.


GRAI wishes you, your friends and family all the best for the holiday season and a safe and prosperous 2015.
Q Connect - GRAI launches platform to link the LGBTI Community

GRAI is launching an exciting new project in 2015.

In line with GRAI’s mission to promote inter-generational connection, Q Connect is a safe, online space where members of Perth’s LGBTI community can connect and share their experience with each other.

There is a need both in business and in communities to connect senior members, who have masses of knowledge and hands-on experience, with younger people who are starting out in their careers. However, a lot of people feel the generation gap has never been wider. The problem of corporate knowledge pouring out of the workforce as baby boomers near retirement age was the focus of a team of web developers and entrepreneurs at Perth’s recent Startup Weekend. Their solution, Living Library, was awarded the Price Waterhouse Cooper price for social innovation.

Living Library is an online social platform that links senior members of the community with younger people who are looking to learn.

Living Library is now being adapted in collaboration with GRAI for use by the LGBTI community - Q Connect. “There are many issues in connecting the generations, but in our market research, we heard, overwhelmingly, that the generations are wanting to connect in a way that is simple and links people with similar interest in a timely fashion. The main barriers found to traditional mentoring were 1) Being able to find someone with the same interests and 2) Being able to trial different mentors and learners.” says Genevieve Major, Founder of Living Library. “Our top priority is to provide a safe and welcoming space for the generations to connect.” The aim of Q Connect is to assist LGBTI generations to learn from each other. Many older LGBTI people have successfully navigated issues younger people are facing, for example, being out in one’s career, dealing with family understanding and developing resilience in life. One mentor stated, “I was uncertain that I would be able to help this young man, but once we started talking, I realised I had so many answers for him and he really appreciated being able to ask specific questions.”

The relationship is not just of value to the younger generation, with many older people reporting they saw themselves and their life experience in new ways after befriending younger people. There is also huge potential for younger people to pass their skills to the senior members of the community.

- Genevieve Major

Looking for pioneers – older LGBTI people to register for the site

If you would like to be part of the trial of this program or have further questions, please contact June Lowe on june_lowe@hotmail.com or Genevieve Major on gmajor.ot@gmail.com
Val’s Cafe - National LGBTI Ageing and Aged Care Conference, Melbourne 2014

Skilfully organised by La Trobe’s Sexual Health and Ageing program (Val’s Cafe), this conference set out to make its mark on our psyches. The first day powerfully drove home the reasons to care deeply about LGBTI elders: exposed to profoundly personal stories, the audience were moved to a place of no return. The conviction that this work matters and our involvement is essential, created a bonded cohort of providers, researchers and activists committed to bring about cultural change within their organisations and beyond. We heard the voices of a lesbian couple negotiating the onset of dementia – told with great courage and even joy. Another woman told of supporting her partner in her end of life care, a story which brought the hall to its feet with respect and gratitude. Trans voices were well represented, with a great many people being on a learning curve on trans’ ageing issues.

The second day focused on aged care services. We were presented with many inspirational examples of LGBTI inclusivity projects that had been undertaken by providers, many of whom were, or had been, in collaborative relationships with Val’s Cafe. A wide range of services and agencies were represented, including: legal and advocacy services, palliative care, support for carers, Community Visitors’ Schemes, Home and Community Care and of course, residential care. In a practical exercise, 3 identical workshops were run, with participants developing responses to case studies demonstrating the difficulties faced by LGBTI elders, especially around cultural safety and trust.

GRAI was strongly represented at the conference, with Board members, June Lowe, Jude Comfort and Wendy Bennett in attendance. Jude Comfort gave a presentation on Discrimination, depression and anxiety, based on collaborative research she undertook (report p5). June Lowe gave a presentation reflecting on the extraordinary cultural and political shifts that have occurred so recently and so rapidly, and the factors for this success.

Altogether, about 200 conference delegates packed the Melbourne Town Hall, a site historically significant to the organisers: the original Val’s Cafe after which their department is named, had been located directly across the road in Swanston Street – where the Cafe’s self-described “outrageous” manager, Val Eastwood, famously provided hospitality and a safe haven for Melbourne’s Gay and Lesbian community in the 1950s.

Many thanks to the organisers, especially Dr Catherine Barrett and Carolyn Whyte, for their long dedication to the rights of LGBTI elders and this fine conference fostering collegiality, confidence and creativity for the work ahead. - June Lowe
Victoria and NSW extinguish gay sex convictions

A hugely different political and social culture now prevails regarding gay sex, and now it is the criminal records themselves that are considered abhorrent rather than the acts for which they were issued. Two States, Victoria and NSW, have finally taken steps to remove these damning records.

In September 2014, the Victorian State Government introduced legislation opening the way for Victorian men to appeal historic convictions for gay sex acts. On application, the Justice Department will examine the case to determine if the act was consensual, and if approved, the courts will expunge the conviction.

(Then) Victorian Premier Denis Napthine said the legislation would right a wrong. "It is now accepted that consensual sexual acts between two adult men should never have been a crime," Dr Napthine said. "These historical convictions have caused ongoing harm and hurt to those who were prosecuted".

Anna Brown from the Human Rights Law Centre said it was difficult to tell how many people had been affected by the historical convictions. "We're talking about potentially hundreds of men who have been convicted of historical homosexual offences," Ms Brown said.

One such man, Peter McEwan, was 17 in 1967 when he was arrested by police for being with a 22 year old in a place known as a hangout for gay men. "At the most we were touching each other, but there was no nudity... let alone sex," he said. "I had no idea what was happening to me, I was utterly alone, I was totally at the mercy of police processes".

"I had no recourse for legal advice, but mostly I felt utter shame and humiliation, both with the process of the two court cases and psychiatric reports and so on, but also with my family."

He pleaded guilty and was convicted of a homosexual offence and released on a two-year good behaviour bond. Mr McEwan's name was on the front page of the newspaper.

A month following the recent reforms by the Victorian government, similar legislation was passed in NSW. On 23 October 2014, the NSW Parliament passed the Criminal Records Amendment (Historical Homosexual Offenses) Bill 2014, sending strong message that consensual sex between men should never have been criminalised.

Justice Koonin, Convenor of the Gay and Lesbian Rights Lobby (GLRL) said “We hope the Bill will go some way to redressing the harm that these unjust convictions have caused over the years.”

Until 1984 in NSW, gay men were convicted and even imprisoned for so-called ‘unnatural offences’ such as ‘the abominable crime of buggery’ and ‘indecency between male persons’. The new Bill establishes a scheme enabling people convicted of consensual homosexual conduct, prior to decriminalization in 1984, to have their criminal records extinguished. The new scheme will also cover people convicted under unequal age of consent laws, which were in place until 2003.

The Inner City Legal Centre (ILC) will provide legal support to men applying to have their convictions quashed. Dr Dan Stubbs, Director of ILC said, “This important reform finally removes the stigma of a criminal conviction from the histories of many gay men. However, these men have already lived through significant trauma at the hands of the State so it’s crucial that the scheme is confidential, accessible and fair, enabling decision-makers to consider all relevant evidence to the benefit of applicants.”

Many men have been deeply burdened by these outdated criminal records, which have sat as a serious im-
pediment for job applications or other occasions requiring a police check, including the ability to get a passport.

Anna Brown, of The Human Rights Law Centre, said, “Erasing these manifestly unjust convictions will help end the stigma, shame and practical difficulties they have inflicted for decades.”

A Western Australian campaign?
In Western Australia, historic convictions for gay sex acts still remain on police records, despite these “crimes” no longer existing in state law. GRAI would welcome a similar campaign to extinguish the records of these convictions in WA. We invite readers comments, send to info@grai.org.au

Queering the home

Since the 1970s, scholars in history, women and gender, and queer studies have tended to understand domesticity in terms of constraint, as a site of assimilation, isolation, and oppression. Could same sex marriage lead to the end of ‘gay culture’, drawing us closer to the heteronormative mould in pursuit of respectability?

Lisa Duggan, in her 2003 book The Twilight of Equality?, defines heteronormativity as “a politics that does not contest dominant heteronormative assumptions and institutions, but upholds and sustains them, while promising the possibility of a demobilized gay constituency and a privatized, depoliticized gay culture anchored in domesticity and consumption.”

Although same-sex marriage seems a vital step towards LGBTI inclusion and equality, some have pointed to its limitations both as a movement and an individual goal, bearing in mind the privatizing and normalizing effects of domesticity (Duggan, Warner). The question arises, is marriage hopelessly normative, and ‘unqueerable’?

We invite readers comments.

Drawn from a blog by Stephen Vider, Deviant Domesticities: Reflections on the Queerness of Home https://col129.mail.live.com/?tid=cmSThDm5BvttQAjfeM0pA2&fid=flinbox

The Invisibles: Moving Vintage Photos of LGBT Couples in the Early 20th Century

This book is a companion to the French film documentary, Les Invisibles, (Director, Sebastien Lifshitz, 2012) which explored the lives of homosexual men and women born in the interwar period (1919 to 1939). In this book, Lifshitz presents a collection of archival photographs of gay and lesbian couples privately celebrating their love in the early 20th century – a time when the private medium of photography could play a very special role for same-gender couples, capturing the need to be made visible in a world where public visibility was denied.

www.brainpickings.org/2014/06/19/the-invisibles-sebastien-lifshitz/
Two very different conferences

I was lucky enough to attend and present at the recent National LGBTI Ageing and Aged Care Conference held in Melbourne and so well organised by Val’s Café. This has been reported on elsewhere in this newsletter (Pg 15). A month later I was off again, this time to Sydney to attend the Pride in Practice 2014 Conference put on by Pride and Diversity.

We have made many gains in LGBTI inclusion in the aged care and aging area in Australia especially those stemming from the National LGBTI Aging and Aged Care Strategy which formed part of much broader reforms to the Aged Care Act. However we all acknowledge we still have a lot of work to do. The roll out of the national training package has been one valuable response to this. Feedback from both presenters and participants here in WA shows that for many workers in the area this seems to be the first time that they have been exposed to sexual and gender diversity, trans and intersex issues. It is pleasing that the training sessions on the whole have been so well received and that there is a steady demand for them across the state.

Equally it was rewarding to see so many from the aged care service sector coming to the first national LGBTI Aging and Aged Care conference in Melbourne. Most were deeply moved by the personal stories presented by older people. Some seem surprised to learn of this history and to think about how this may impact on their own practice and the role that employers can play ensuring LGBTI inclusiveness for both clients and employees.

Yet at the Pride in Practice conference which admittedly has perhaps a different target group, the discussion had a different flavour. Pride in Practice attracted more of the ‘big end’ of town with attendance mainly of people employed in the human resources area or dedicated Diversity and Inclusion sections within large organisations. Most were members of Pride and Diversity. For this conference the discussion had moved way past ‘why’ we need LGBTI diversity to ‘how’ to do it better and why it was good business. They spoke about how to be an employer of choice for LGBTI employees as well as making decisions on their own client and supplier relationships based on the values of those organisations around diversity and inclusion practices. It felt to me that while both conferences contributed greatly to LGBTI inclusion, the Pride in Practice one took the discussion to another level.

‘Pride in Diversity’ is Australia’s first and only not-for-profit workplace program designed specifically to assist Australian employers with the inclusion of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) employees.” http://www.prideindiversity.com.au/. Pride in Diversity sits under the ACON (the AIDS Council of NSW) and operates nationally with funding from employer memberships and sponsorships. They administer the Australian Workplace Equality Index – AWEI and provide support and guidance and training for member organisations to improve their LGBTI practices. I was there because Curtin University, my employer, was ranked second nationally in 2014 and the highest ranked university in the AWEI. I presented a little about how Curtin University achieved this. Looking at the membership of Pride and Diversity it is perhaps a different cohort to those we are targeting through aged care services. It includes KPMG, Australian Federal Police, Lend Lease, Macquarie Bank, Telstra, and Australian Red Cross Blood Service.

However it would be great to see some of the aged care service providers move to the philosophy of not needing to even question the need for LGBTI inclusive practice but to be looking at how they can really embed this in all levels of their organisation and to creatively lead their own organisational innovation in the area.

- Dr Jude Comfort Curtin University and GRAI Board Member
Pride Frankfurt

Jude Comfort, advocate for ‘Gap Years at any age’ shares travel tales from her recent cycle tour, August 2014.

During my recent six month cycling adventure in Europe I was lucky enough to be in Frankfurt, Germany when the Pride event was on; in fact the parade went past my hotel. In Germany Pride is called Christopher Street Day (CSD) after the Stonewall Riots location in New York. It was interesting to reflect on LGBTI community at this time. The day time parade, bigger than Perth, ended in a central plaza where for three days there was a very vibrant entertainment area set up with plenty of entertainment, food and beer on sale and lots of active and passive smoking.

However while LGBTI people were not shuffled off the street at the end of the parade, as happens here in Perth, and rainbow flags and tourist information on the pride event were clearly visible, older LGBTI people were prominently absent. The parade had a good mix of fun entries, political entries, groups of young body painted, loud music, drag queens in outrageous shoes and lots of colour there were few older folk. The one exception was an entry promoting an older LGBTI telephone support organisation – but only one.

So it seems that we are not alone in the invisibility stakes when it comes to LGBTI community events. So where were the older community members, does the Frankfurt CSD organisation have a positive inclusive approach to older members, are older members faced by the same ageism within the broader LGBTI community? Unfortunately this was a cycling trip and not a study tour and my lack of German meant it was difficult to find this out.

I was however pleased to see that many, many more older people were on bikes of all shapes and sizes reflecting a culture that positively embraces cycling for transport. Lycra was a minority fashion statement and people have a lifetime approach to cycling encouraged by good cycle infrastructure. There were a range of bikes suited for people as they age to keep cycling an option. Electric bikes were everywhere and not just for older people, with recharging points at cafes etc. This low frame bike and the three wheeler were good for people with less mobility.

I met many older cycle tourists and did not feel out of place at all. We have so much to learn about the role that cycling could play in our society and how it could contribute to less social isolation as people tend to interact with each other on a bike than when encased in a metal box on wheels – which is more the norm here.
“Right to Belong” Powers Ahead

When GRAI launched the ‘Right to Belong’ training project on 6th May, we received great initial enthusiasm from the aged care sector. However, translating this interest into concrete bookings took time as we needed to reach the right decision-makers within various organisations. The Project Management Group (PMG) provided invaluable support often providing useful links, for example, PMG member Ann Zubrick’s connections with her counterparts on other Boards resulted in some immediate successes where other efforts were failing.

The current composition of the PMG is: Susan Harwood (GRAI Training Project Coordinator); Steve Singer (Community member and PMG Chair); Beth Cameron (CEO LASA); Ann Zubrick (COTA) and Tirzah Anglin (LASA); and GRAI Board members Leonie Stickland, Brett Tizard, Jude Comfort, and Cettina Raccuia (Treasurer). We thank the PMG for their vital contribution to the project’s implementation.

Despite the slow start, by the end of the year we had difficulty meeting the demand as word spread about the training sessions. Although we have a dedicated pool of trainers, matching requested dates with trainers’ availability sometimes proved a challenge.

However, by year’s end (through the hard work of our core group of trainers) we had delivered 13 courses to 9 organisations. Participating organisations included Brightwater, Hall and Prior (Albany and Perth), Baptistcare, Rise Network, Bethanie Group (chaplains), Southcare and St Ives.

Pleasingly, evaluations have been uniformly positive, with many saying their whole organisation should participate in this training. Having CEOs and managers attend their in-house courses is invaluable: their stated commitment to cultural change within their organisation sends a powerful message.

More organisations now want to come on board. There are 7 courses in the pipeline for January-February 2015 and at least one more regional course is planned for Albany. This is an excellent “standing start” for 2015.

We have also received requests for half day versions of the training course and other groups have asked for customised training for targeted groups (eg Human Resources, or Aged Care Assessment Teams). At the moment, these options are not covered within the contract for the federally funded sessions and would need to be delivered on a fee-paying basis. We note that the design of separate courses is very time intensive, but this is something that is being considered by both GRAI and the National LGBTI Health Care Alliance.

Although we are considering offering a ‘short course’ in future, our preferred model remains the full-day program as its’ experiential, interactive nature allows time to explore misconceptions and develop skills to challenge homophobic behaviours/language from staff and clients alike. Participants learn not only about older LGBTI people, but also engage with their own attitudes and responses, a combination essential to achieve solid cultural safety for LGBTI clients, clients’ families and organisations’ staff.

For further information and/or to book a Right To Belong training session, contact Project Coordinator, Susan Harwood, on training@grai.org.au.
All I want for Christmas is an LGBTI Aged Care Facility? Well actually NO!

So here I am sitting on Father Christmas’ knee (no giggling please) and he is asking me what I want for Christmas. He knows I am on the Board of GRAI so assumes this is what I want for Christmas. Imagine the look on his face when I say no, no thank you, no way and absolutely not.

It’s probably the same look that I found on the face of a long term member of GRAI when I said I didn’t want one. A mix of horror, confusion and disappointment.

The sad news for us all is that a single LGBTI Aged Care Facility will just not work for a number of reasons – some practical and some philosophical. So let me outline my reasons.

Too small?

A specialised or niche Aged Care facility would hold about 80 people. This seems to be a number that is both financially viable and still manageable. So the current membership of GRAI and partners could fit but no more. What about all the other LGBTI people getting to a “certain age”? What about those in existing “non-LGBTI” facilities? Who will be looking after them?

Too expensive?

If we are looking for property within the “golden triangle” this will cost a small fortune – discounting the prospect of Father Christmas or Twiggy Forrest coming to our rescue, an inner city location would make this financially unviable. So we need to find somewhere else?

Too far away?

The only purpose built LGBTI facility in Australia is in rural Victoria. And not somewhere close to Melbourne or to Daylesford. The property is cheaper but does have of all the downsides of rural and regional living including less health facilities and fewer cultural activities.

Why do I need to move at all?

I’m a suburban gay man. I don't live in the inner city. I don’t think I want to. I like my community just where I am. Why should I have to move to the CBD to get my LGBTI Aged Care? What about GRAI members in Albany, Bunbury, Geraldton and beyond? Why should they be displaced and removed from everyone they know? This fails the current aged care practice where people are supposed to grow old in their own community.

Do we just give up?

So that’s a sad tale of woe – too small, too expensive, in the wrong place, doesn’t look after all of GRAI’s membership. It’s a disaster!

Well, not really. Not if I get what I really want.

So what do I want?

I want to change the world. Like all the Board members of GRAI, I want to make it a better place for everyone. I want all facilities to adopt our best practice guidelines. I want all facilities to undergo the Right to Belong training. I want all facilities to start working on the Val’s Cafe program.

I’m greedy!

I don’t want an LGBTI Aged Care Facility, I’m greedy, I have bigger plans in mind. I want every Aged Care Facility to be an LGBTI Aged Care Facility.

Crossing fingers that I’m not on the naughty list, GRAI might just get us closer to this in 2015.

- Brett Tizard
Coming Events

Tenth Anniversary
Yes it’s hard to believe that GRAI is nearly 10 years old! We will be celebrating at Loton Park Tennis Club on Sunday 22 February. Be sure to put that afternoon aside to join us in looking back on our achievements while taking a sneak peak at what’s to come. More details will follow.

Helen Makeham ‘Planning for your Future’
In March, GRAI Board member Helen Makeham will hold two workshops on “Planning for your Future”. Helen, who works as an Guardian for the Office of the Public Advocate (OPA), will discuss the importance of Enduring Power of Attorney, Enduring Power of Guardianship and Advance Health Directives. These are important issues for everyone, but are particularly significant for the LGBTI community to ensure our affairs are handled in the way that we would wish them to be, should we be in a position where we lack capacity to give direct instructions. The first session will be presented at Prime Timers’ meeting at 2pm on Sun 8th February and will be a brief overview of the issues. RSVP to Prime Timer President, Chris Hart on prez@primetimerswa.com
The second workshop on Wednesday 2nd March will be at Citiplace (Perth Railway Station concourse), and will be a longer session, from 1 – 4pm with light refreshments. RSVP to info@GRAI.com.au

Justice Michel Kirby
We are extremely fortunate that Justice Michel Kirby is able to be our guest of honour for a special GRAI soiree. The date is 26 March, and other details will follow.

Thur 22 Jan - 11.45am
Lesbians Who Lunch – Lunch Club for Older Lesbians. Floreat Beach Kiosk (Info/RSVP: 9393 8873 june_lowe@hotmail.com)

Sun 8 Feb - 2pm
GRAI – Presentation to Prime Timers

Sun 15 Feb
Pride Fairday, Hyde Park.
GRAI Launch of Older LGBTI Needs Survey

Thur 19 Feb - noon
Lesbians Who Lunch. Details TBC.

Sun 22 Feb - afternoon
GRAI's 10th Anniversary, Loton Park Tennis Club

Sun 8 Mar - 2pm
“Planning For Your Future” – Presentation to Prime Timers, Lotteries House, City West. Helen Makeham, Office of the Public Advocate. RSVP prez@primetimerswa.com

Wed 11 Mar - 1pm
“Planning For Your Future” – Presentation to LGBTI community, Citiplace Community Centre, Perth Railway Station. RSVP info@grai.org.au

Wed 18 Mar
WA Dementia Training Study Centre, Curtin Uni, ‘Why LGBTI ageing should be everyone’s business?’

Thur 19 Mar - noon
Lesbians Who Lunch. Details TBC.

Thur 26 Mar - 6.30pm
GRAI, evening with Justice Michael Kirby. Details TBC
GRAI was established in August 2005 to explore the development of retirement and aged care services and facilities for older and ageing people of diverse sexualities and gender identities.

We want a world where older GLBTI will enjoy a rewarding quality of life. We want to create a responsive and inclusive mature age environment that promotes and supports a quality life for older people of diverse sexualities and gender identities.

GRAI is keen to explore opportunities to talk with current providers of retirement and aged care services, government agencies and industry groups to ensure the issues of GLBTI ageing and retirement are being taken seriously.

GRAI continues to work to establish successful partnerships with providers, services and agencies that acknowledge the needs of older GLBTI people and encouraging the GLBTI community to support these organisations when they need to access relevant services.

Do you have some news that we should share with the rest of GRAI? Contact the Editor, Brett Tizard, at the address below.

LESBIANS WHO LUNCH
Lunch Club for Older Lesbians
A monthly gathering with a moveable venue

When: Thursday 22 January :: 11.45 am
Venue: The Kiosk Floreat Beach, Challenger Parade, City Beach

Info and bookings
RSVP by 19 Jan, so we have a big enough table!!!!
Ring us if you need transport

June :: 9383 7753 | june_lowe@hotmail.com
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GLBTI Rights in Ageing Inc
PO Box 514
North Perth WA 6906
Email: info@grai.org.au
Web: www.grai.org.au