



Putting Students First

Since Local Schools, Local Decisions was announced in March this year, the Federation has been warning the community that this permanent structural change, long advocated by NSW Treasury officials, will be the mechanism that will give much greater and more centralised control to the Treasurer to determine resource and staffing levels in our schools. When it is in place, student enrolments, learning needs and curriculum will no longer determine staffing levels as is now the case. Once a staffing budget is in place, principals will have no choice but to ensure their staffing levels fit the budget. From this point on, the state government will have a simple mechanism to impose any 'efficiency saving' it sets.

The notion of 'principal autonomy' has now been exposed for what it is, a cynical political manoeuvre that will require principals to do more with less, and to engage in a recurring exercise in deciding what to do without.

A similar devolved financial structure has operated in TAFE for many years which has led to the loss of permanent positions, courses, equity programs and funding. Now TAFE will lose an additional 800 positions and will impose an increase in fees, limiting access to courses for many students.

So what are the specific concerns for GLBTI issues and the GLBTI community with these changes? Some teaching staff have already indicated that they would be less likely to disclose their sexual orientation or gender identity to others at school for fear of being the victim of discriminatory staffing practices should principals gain more ability to hire and fire their own staff. While such

behaviour would contravene anti-discrimination laws, some people have stated they would be less likely to disclose their GLBTI identity when engaged in insecure work anyway. Should people feel they have experienced discrimination and unfair treatment when applying for a job, during employment, or by not being provided the same opportunities as colleagues due to an individual's actual or perceived sexual orientation they should contact Federation or their Organiser for advice.

Other concerns are around the lack of funding allocated to programs to address homophobic bullying. Back in January 2011, then Education Minister Verity Firth announced a pilot program aimed at tackling homophobia in schools in response to Australian research that indicated homophobic bullying is on the rise in Australia and the vast majority of it takes place in schools. It has been almost two years since the research that sparked this response was released. It has also been 20 months since Firth's announcement, and schools are yet to start the pilot program. With only \$250,000 allocated to the program, schools will be required to rely on current support structures, especially those provided in the community, as opposed to having specific strategies which could include curriculum support documents, workshops for students and parents on homophobic bullying, and professional development for teachers developed and provided by the DEC to schools to address homophobia. With O'Farrell making cuts to the education budget it is unlikely further money would be allocated to this program to either sustain it or introduce it to additional schools. It is much more likely that this will be a responsibility that will be

shifted on to schools with little support and no additional resourcing.

The realignment of positions in DEC's state and regional offices is also an area of concern for those involved in LGBTI issues. The DEC's equity unit has provided support to schools on LGBTI issues in the past but this unit will no longer exist in the same way. Additionally, the CLIC has provided resources to teachers to deliver programs, and the PDHPE CLIC in particular has produced some great inclusive resources. With cuts to CLIC, at a time when we have a national curriculum about to be introduced via NSW specific syllabus with the Board of Studies, it is a concern that inclusive practices may be neglected due to the under resourcing of this teacher resource.

However, schools and the education budget are not the only ones to suffer cuts to funding as there are cuts across the state in a range of areas. In August the *Sydney Morning Herald* reported that an internal review by the Department of Family and Community Services recommended reducing funding to at least seven organisations, including the Welfare Rights Centre, Lifeline (Sydney and Sutherland), Redfern Legal Centre's financial counselling service and the Gay and Lesbian Counselling Service. The report is part of an attempt by the department to cut spending so as to achieve new efficiency and salary cap targets. The Managing Director of Twenty10, Rebecca Reynolds, which incorporates the Gay and Lesbian Counselling Service said the \$80,000 it received funded a phone counselling service that had operated for 41 years and that its 100-strong team of volunteers took over 1,500 calls every year on usually complex issues concerning the lives of people who already were disconnected or isolated. "There's still an absolute need for it," she said. Greens MP Cate Faehrmann said, "Given the frightening statistics on homophobic bullying, and over representation in homelessness and mental health, the government must commit to supporting Twenty10 and

this means not taking an axe to its funding."

Additionally we can look to Queensland for examples of what could happen next with the changes that the Liberal National Party Government made in May when they pulled \$2.5 million in funding from Healthy Communities, a gay and lesbian health service. Healthy Communities is best known for their Rip and Roll campaign which depicted an ad with a gay couple hugging. The ads were pulled from Brisbane bus shelters, only to be reinstated after an overwhelming online protest. The government claimed the group's initiatives to arrest HIV rates weren't working as HIV diagnoses rates in Queensland were the highest since figures became available. However this was countered with the executive director of Healthy Communities highlighting that it only received funding for HIV prevention among gay men, a group that has decreased as a proportion of people diagnosed with HIV over the past 10 years.

The Federation will continue to campaign against these attacks on public education. The next phase in the campaign will be to build support in every local community against the NSW Government's policies and the cuts. A Community Day of Action for teachers, parents and concerned citizens will be held at Tumbalong Park, Darling Harbour, Sydney at 11am on Sunday November 18. Regional centres throughout NSW will also hold events and all members are asked to support their local day of action.

Wear It Purple

September 7 marked the 3rd annual Wear It Purple Day, a student-led initiative that began in response to a spate of suspected gay bullying-related youth suicides in the United States.

Wear It Purple encouraged people to wear purple on the day to help promote the message to young people that: ***You have the right to be proud of who you are.*** Participants were encouraged to upload pictures of themselves wearing purple to the Wear It Purple Face-

book page, to show support for the event. Participants were also encouraged to engage in discussion with others about why they were wearing purple, and why bullying is not acceptable.

The event gained strong support from various organisations across the community including federation, ACON, Twenty10 and the NSW Police. Representatives from a number of schools and the DEC attended the launch of the event, some of whom spoke about their school's plans to celebrate the day.

Federation was also involved on the day with many staff and Officers wearing purple and by hosting a morning tea. Photos were taken of people in purple to upload to the Wear It Purple Facebook page to show support for the aims of the organisation and the day. Federation's own Facebook cover page was updated to wear purple and show support in the week leading up to the event.

While the events and activities that took place on September 7 have raised the issue of homophobic bullying and the right of all people to be who they are, it is important that this message is not lost throughout the remainder of the year. As Jayde Ellis, from Wear It Purple stated at their launch, "It's about the dialogue that is created from this event, about the message that bullying is not acceptable, and communicating that there are many people who young GLBTI people can go to for support as they may not be aware of this."

GLORIAS

The GLORIAS (*Gay and Lesbian Outrageous, Ridiculous and Ignorant comment Awards*) are an annual event in their third year, organised by Penny Sharpe MLC. They aim to shine a light on the outrageous, ignorant and ridiculous comments made about our GLBTI citizens every day. The GLORIAS are modelled on Meredith Burgmann's annual Ernie Awards, an event that has for the last 20 years given awards for the most sexist comments of the year.

Hosted by special guest David Marr, this year the GLORIAS were divided into eight categories: politics, media, sport, law, religion, online, international and LGBTI community.

"Just when we think things are getting better for GLBTI people and their families, high profile people come out with some of the most atrocious comments," Penny Sharpe said. Jim Wallace's comments suggesting that smoking is healthier than gay marriage received a flood of nominations. And there was competition in the sports category this year between Margaret Court (for her stance against gay marriage), Jason Akermanis (for claiming nobody cared about a young gay Victorian country footballer's campaign to get the AFL to introduce a "Pride Round") and St Kilda forward Stephen Milne for alleged on field homophobic taunts. Although Court took out the gong for this one.

A Golden GLORIA is also awarded on the night which is determined by a boo-off at the presentation of the awards. This year's recipient was Miranda Devine for her article linking same sex marriage and parenting to the London riots in which she wrote, "As a Catholic, I believe the push for same-sex marriage is not about enhancing the lives of gay couples. In countries where it has been legalised, there has been no rush to the altar. The issue is largely symbolic. It is simply a political tool to undermine the last bastion of the bourgeois morality — the traditional nuclear family. You only had to see the burning streets of London last week to see the manifestation of a fatherless society". The article also won her the Media GLORIA.

For information about the GLORIAS, and to see who was awarded with one, visit www.theglorias.com.au

Contact

The Gay and Lesbian Special Interest Group (SIG) welcomes new members with an interest in this area. To join the SIG please contact the Federation on (02) 9217 2100 or email glbti@nswtf.org.au.

Linked to the SIG is the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex (GLBTI) Restricted Committee.

Mel Smith is the Officer attached to the SIG and the restricted committee.

Federation website

Federation's website has a gay and lesbian page under "Interests" which can be found at <http://www.nswtf.org.au/my-interests/special-interest-groups/gay-lesbian.html>. It is continually updated and currently has general information for teachers, as well as links to factsheets, worksheets and activities, training, research and community organisations. There is also a section that provides resources to assist students.

Special Interest Group

The next meeting of the Gay and Lesbian Special Interest Group will be held at **3.30pm on Monday November 26 at Teachers House, 23-33 Mary Street, Surry Hills**. Teleconference facilities will be available for those who are not able to be at the meeting in person. To RSVP to the meeting and gain the details for teleconferencing, please email glbti@nswtf.org.au

Professional Development Training: Twenty10 "Here and Now"

Here and Now is a one-day practical workshop from Twenty10's core training package, for building confidence in working with young people of diverse genders, sexes and sexualities wherever they are. It offers participants the opportunity to consider how they can best provide a safe and welcoming environment where young people feel safe to be themselves. The package introduces participants to the latest research and thinking around sexual and gender identity and makes some helpful suggestions around what peo-

ple can do when working with young people of diverse genders, sexes and/or sexualities. The next course will be run on **Friday December 7, 9am—5pm at Twenty10** (with registrations closing on Friday November 23). The course fee is \$130 per person which includes all materials and catering (\$110 for each additional person from the same place).

For more information visit the Twenty10 website <http://twenty10.org.au/family-community/here-and-now>

Marriage rally

The next rally for marriage equality will be held at **1pm on Sunday November 25 at the Sydney Town Hall**. For many Australians marriage is a profoundly meaningful way to demonstrate love, strengthen commitment and reinforce family ties. Being denied the right to marry because of gender or sexuality is simply not fair and the rally is one way in which people can demonstrate their desire to see same sex marriage

Sydney Mardi Gras

Federation will once again be involved in activities at Mardi Gras next year. If you are interested in assisting or being involved in these activities please make contact with Mel Smith via glbti@nswtf.org.au or sign up to the SIG and keep your eyes posted for notices of activities and expressions to be involved.

Homophobia and transphobia hurt everyone

By Terence Humphreys, Capacity Building Manager at Twenty10

Every student has the right to *feel* and *be* safe at school, but many students feel less safe than others and this directly impacts on their participation at school as well as their academic achievements. Most teachers and school

counsellors are only too aware that many students who identify as same-sex attracted, bisexual, gay or gender questioning are likely to be at the brunt of homophobic comments, abuse, rumours, social isolation and even physical abuse. It isn't only those students who are "out" in the school who are the targets of homophobic or transphobic abuse. Many students are bullied or abused regardless of their actual sexual orientation or gender identity, instead being bullied based on other people's perceptions of their sexuality, because they look or behave a certain way, or because their friend or family member is same-sex attracted or gender questioning.

Case Study

Jay is 14 and comes from a rainbow family, and has two mothers who are same-sex attracted who provide a loving, stable home life. Jay is very happy at home and sees no difference between her family with two mums and another person's family with a mum and a dad. Jay's mums are on the school's P&C and are very active in raising money for the school. The school is hosting a "Wear It Purple" Day in a few weeks to foster inclusivity, celebrate diversity within the school and to help reduce homophobia and transphobia. Jay is putting up a poster promoting the day on one of the school's noticeboards when another student grabs the poster out of her hands and rips it in half, calling her a "dyke" and pushing her to the wall before walking off laughing.

Taking an action when you see homophobic or transphobic bullying occurring can help create a safer space for all students. Recent Australian research showed that students don't even need to be the target of homophobic or transphobic abuse to feel unsafe, seeing other students being bullied and abused seriously impacts on their sense of feeling safe.

Call it: Describe what you saw/heard
"I saw you push Jay, call her a dyke and tear up the poster."

Agreement: Refer to an agreement
"As you know, as part of our anti-bullying guidelines we have a zero tolerance in this school for homophobia and physical or verbal abuse."

Put a price on it: Alert the students to consequences of their behaviour (assumes an agreement has been set up and that students are aware of it) *"as you know that means that..."* It also provides a teachable moment where you can unpack with students the impact homophobia and transphobia has on all students regardless of their gender or sexual orientation.

Remember too that Jay has been physically and verbally abused and may need further support.

Case study supplied by Twenty10. For more information contact Twenty10 at: <http://www.twenty10.org.au> or phone (02) 8594 9555 or 1800 65 2010. Additional information about supporting GLBTI students in school can be found in Federation's Gender, Sexuality and Identity kit which can be accessed online at <http://www.nswtf.org.au/pages/gender-sexuality-identity-kit.html>

Merry Christmas

While Christmas is some time away, this is the last GLBTI Newsletter for the year so the Special Interest Group and the Restricted Committee would like to wish you all a very merry Christmas with your loved ones as well as a safe and relaxing holiday break.

Feedback

If you have feedback in relation to the newsletter or website, or information regarding GLBTI issues please contact Mel Smith, NSW Teachers Federation, Newcastle Regional Office at (02) 4920 9833 or via glbti@nswtf.org.au

If you, or a colleague, is experiencing homophobia, discrimination or harassment contact your local Organiser for advice, or alternatively you can call our Communications Room on (02) 9217 2487 or 1300 654 367.