



Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Restricted Committee

The Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Restricted Committee works towards implementing actions raised in Federation's Gender, sexuality and identity policy, as well as contributing to the publication of this newsletter.

The committee consists of up to six members. Craig Austin, Wayne Donovan, Victoria Greenaway, Kat Hand and Daniel Young were elected to the Committee at a recent Federation Council meeting. The Officer attached to the committee is Mel Smith.

Calendar entries

Some significant dates to make a note of on your calendars that can provide an opportunity for your educational community to raise awareness of gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex (GLBTI) issues or perspectives, or to celebrate GLBTI people and communities are:

- **May 15:** International Day of Families
- **May 17:** International Day Against Homophobia
- **June 3:** Gay and Lesbian Special Interest Group meeting
- **August 30:** Wear It Purple Day
- **December 10:** Human Rights Day.

Consolidation of Commonwealth Anti-Discrimination legislation

As reported previously, the Federal Government is moving to remove discrimination against same-sex couples and sex and gender diverse people under Commonwealth law. Currently, there is little protection from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity at a federal level. The proposed new protections were included in the draft Human Rights and Anti-Discrimination Bill, which was released in November 2012.

The bill aims to make the system of federal anti-discrimination laws clearer and more effective. However, as a result of submissions made to the Senate Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs the process will take some time. The Committee recognised the pressing need for protection from discrimination for GLBTI communities. Conse-

quently the Attorney-General has introduced amendments to the Sex Discrimination Act 1984 to provide new protections against discrimination on the basis of a person's sexual orientation, gender identity and intersex status; and to provide protection against discrimination for same-sex de facto couples.

The Sex Discrimination Amendment (Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Intersex Status) Bill 2013 serves as a first step in providing federal protections to GLBTI people while the Government considers the content and form of the consolidation of the Commonwealth anti-discrimination acts.

The amendments will provide that discrimination on the new grounds is unlawful in the same areas of life as for other grounds already covered by the Sex Discrimination Act. These

include areas of work, education and so on. The bill also amends exemptions to continue under and encompass the new grounds. This includes exemptions for religious bodies in relation to employment and the provision of education that are currently in place.

Specifically the changes include the inser-

TAFE wikipage

TAFE NSW recently developed an anti-homophobia wikipage with information, resources, policies and guidelines for protecting the rights of gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex members of the educational community.

The wikipage is informative and can be located at <http://antihomophobia.sydneyinstitute.wikispaces.net/home>. Federation encourages TAFE teachers to visit the site.

The wikipage is a direct result of discussions held between representatives from the Department of Education and Communities

and Federation regarding the NSW Government's commitment to address prejudice-related violence against gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people in NSW. For specific strategies classroom teachers can utilise across a range of learning stages (pre-school to tertiary), members can refer to Federation's leaflet *Supporting people of diverse sexuality and genders in education* which can be accessed by calling Federation directly or accessing the *Gender, sexuality and identity kit* online at <http://www.nswtf.org.au/pages/gender-sexuality-identity-kit.html>.

tion of definitions for "sexual orientation", "gender identity" and "intersex status"; a separate ground of discrimination on the basis of intersex status and amending the term "marital status" to "marital or relationship status" to provide protection from discrimination for same-sex de facto couples.

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International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia

In many countries around the world loving someone of the same sex is still considered illegal and can involve punishment including imprisonment or death. In many more countries, citizens are denied their right to live according to their preferred gender identity. However, as well as legal discriminations, homophobia and transphobia deny millions of people across the world their basic human dignity. Consequently, a need exists to raise awareness of this issue, to fight against the homophobic and transphobic laws that many people live under, and address the violence and lack of dignity that GLBTI people face in their lives around the world.

In order to draw the attention of policy-



makers, opinion leaders, social movements, the public and the media to this issue, the International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia (IDAHO) was created. Starting in 2004, IDAHO has continued to grow and now has received official recognition from international institutions such as the European Parliament, and by countless local authorities. Most United Nations agencies also mark the day with specific events.

May 17 was specifically chosen to commemorate the

World Health Organization's decision in 1990 to declassify homosexuality as a mental disorder and on this day around the world, people take action to raise the profile of these concerns to the public.

Some suggested activities to mark IDAHO 2013 include:

- note IDAHO on the calendar
- speak out against homophobic/transphobic comments and acts
- implement a GLBTI specific lesson plan about homophobia/transphobia
- create and display posters to develop awareness of homophobic/transphobic practises and behaviours
- ensure your educational institution has

books and other resources that are inclusive of GLBTI people and their families in its library

- hold an event to recognise the day. This could include inviting speakers from various organisations, or running activities throughout the day
- access professional development resources. An example for primary schools is *'It's Elementary'*, a DVD that is available through the Federation library.

Celebration of diversity at Burwood Girls High

As part of the Proud Schools program, Burwood Girls High School hosted a Day of Celebration in February. The school's True Colours support group invited students and teachers from other Sydney Region schools involved in Proud Schools pilot to attend.

Guests joined Burwood Girls High School for a celebratory school assembly including guest speakers, Jayde Ellis and Brenna Harding from Wear It Purple; musical performances by students and a special visit from drag queen Joyce Mange.

A rainbow flag raising ceremony followed the assembly where students and guests consumed rainbow coloured cupcakes. Staff and students were also encouraged to wear colours of the

rainbow on the day, reflecting the colours of the gay and lesbian pride, or rainbow, flag.

In addition to wearing rainbow colours the school welcomed students and guests to show their support for equal rights by signing their True Colours mural in the playground.

Forums were conducted by Twenty10 and Family Planning NSW. Burwood Girls High School's Proud Schools coordinator Karyn O'Brien has been working closely with these organisations said the organisations conducted highly successful consultative forums with students, parents and teachers about what they think of their school environment in providing a safe place for rainbow youth and same-sex attracted families.

Wear It Purple

School students and workplaces across Australia will wear purple to show support for same-sex attracted and gender questioning young people at risk on August 30.

This date marks the 4th 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. The message behind the day to young people is: "You have the right to be proud of who you are."

It may seem that doing something as simple as wearing purple on a particular day would not make

a significant impact, but part of the aim of the day is to raise the profile of the issue and to get people talking about homophobia — how to address it and how to support young people who are experiencing this behaviour. Therefore it is important to talk about why people are wearing purple, the impact of homophobic bullying and how to combat it.

All schools have a responsibility to ensure that students have access to a safe and supportive environment, free of harassment and bullying and choosing a day to highlight this to school members in a positive and proactive manner is a helpful strategy.

Gay and Lesbian Special Interest Group

The next meeting of the Gay and Lesbian Special Interest Group (SIG) will be held at 4pm on

June 3 at Teachers Federation House, 23-33 Mary Street, Surry Hills.

The meeting will provide members with the opportunity to discuss relevant GLBTI issues, inform Federation of specific areas of concern and provide advice to Federation concerning policies relating to GLBTI issues. 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.

The SIG welcomes new members. To join the SIG please email glbti@nswtf.org.au.

Same Difference — Reducing Homophobia in Schools

Family Planning NSW now offers the Same Difference — Reducing Homophobia in Schools program for young people and their facilitators.

The program delivers interactive education sessions exploring issues relating to discrimination, homophobia and developing a safe and supportive environment for same-sex attracted young people. An especially meaningful and memorable component is the story of a young same-sex attracted speaker, allowing participants to reflect on others' lived experience of same-sex attraction.

Feedback from audiences indicates that the program:

- confronts stereotypes (“She didn’t look like a lesbian”, “I thought all gays chose to be gay, it was a lifestyle thing”)
- encourages empathy (“How did you feel when you had to leave your school and

home and start again?”, “How did you feel when your dad didn’t talk to you for two years?”)

- puts a human face to the issue (“I didn’t realise gays got such a hard time”, “How did you cope with all the verbal abuse”)
- provides a safe space for participants to ask questions they wouldn’t normally get to ask (“Do you feel sad or ashamed that you are gay?”, “How do lesbians have children?”)

Sessions are for small groups (up to 30 participants) in school and non-school settings and generally run for two hours, however, modifications may be negotiated and larger groups may be accommodated. Costs are kept at a minimum.

To book a Same Difference session or for more information contact Health Promotion Officer — Youth Clara Adams, (02) 8752 4313, samedifference@fpnsw.org.au.

Professional development training

Twenty10’s 1-day practical workshop, Here and Now, builds 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 people can do when working with young people of diverse genders, sexes and/or sexualities. For more information and dates visit the Twenty10 website: <http://twenty10.org.au/family-community/here-and-now>.

Feedback

If you have feedback in relation to the newsletter or website, or information regarding GLBTI issues please contact Mel Smith at the Newcastle regional office, (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 call Federation’s Communications/Welfare section on (02) 9217 2487 or 1300 654 367.

Responding to homophobia and/or transphobia

Terence Humphreys

Capacity Building Manager, Twenty10

While a growing number of schools are finding new and better ways to celebrate the diversity within their halls (for example International Day Against Homophobia or Wear It Purple Day), addressing homophobia and transphobia in schools remains a concern for students and teachers alike.

Homophobia and transphobia aren't about the students who are gay or transgender in

your school. Homophobia and transphobia are issues about safety, and every student in your school has the right to an education in a space where they feel safe and are safe (and students in every other school for that matter).

But if teachers only look out for words like "faggot" or "dyke" yelled across the playground, or physical violence, they are at risk of missing the large chunk of behaviour that often goes beneath the radar, including innuendos, social exclusion, and damaging or stealing someone's property.

Case study

Tucker is 12 years old and is experiencing social exclusion by their classmates as well as name-calling including "homo". This often happens in class, but their teachers usually only tell the students to settle down rather than address the issue. Tucker was born female and doesn't identify as a girl. They have short hair and dressed in an androgynous way for a recent mufti day at school. As the students arrive in class after lunch break, some students are discussing with their teacher the football game they'd seen on the oval. One student commented that the team of boys were playing like a "pack of girls" and most students laughed. "Tucker should play on that team because she doesn't know if she's a boy or a girl either," another student added. "Now, now," said the teacher.

Some teachers are fearful to pull students up on homophobic language or behaviour, feeling they don't have the expertise to handle it. Most comments, however, aren't that dissimilar from racism where a person is made to feel less than the other students (usually the majority) because of their identity. Homophobia is often used in a similar way, and can be responded to in ways that would be useful if the behaviour was racist.

Act immediately

Not acting implies acceptance and approval for the behaviour so interrupt the behaviour immediately and publicly.

Highlight the unacceptable behaviour

The teacher saying, "Now, now," actively contributes to an environment where Tucker feels unsafe. In this instance the term "girls" is used in a derogatory way, and a student is targeted because they do not conform to gender stereotypes (the gender binary). These are forms of sexism, heteronormativity and transphobia. The teacher could say instead: "It's not OK to say that about Tucker or the football team. Calling the football team a 'pack of girls' is disrespectful and suggests that girls aren't as good as boys. What you've said about Tucker is transphobic and that is completely unacceptable in my classroom. Does anyone know what transphobia is?"

Refer to your school's policies

You might find it helpful to refer to your school's position on homophobia and transphobia. Ideally homophobia and transphobia should be specifically listed

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there alongside racism, sexism and other forms of discrimination. If there is a standard disciplinary action for similar forms of discrimination such as racism, then use that as a guide to hold students accountable for their behaviour and breach of school policy.

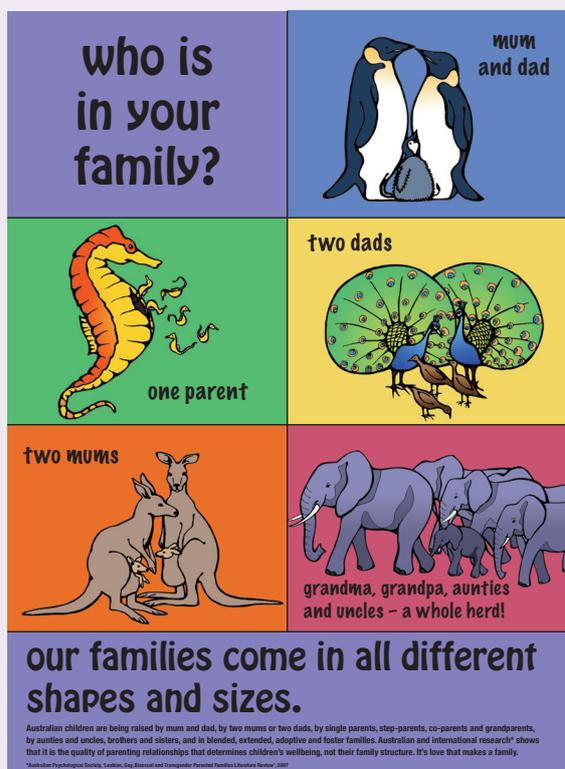
Seize the teachable moment

Sexism, gender stereotyping, homophobia and transphobia are all alive and well in our society, and this a perfect opportunity to discuss their causes and their impacts with students. "Our world is full of people who are different from you, and you may not always understand their difference. Everyone has the right to be themselves regardless of who they are, what they look like or how you think

they should look or behave. Has someone ever judged you by your appearance or the clothes you were wearing? How did it feel?"

Offer support

Tucker has been publicly humiliated and excluded by their peers, and at age 12 that is harmful. It is important they know you are there for them if they need you. It can be better to offer support to the target of the homophobia or transphobia support privately, but either way do it in a way that doesn't mean they need to disclose their identity. Even if you suspect a student is gay or gender questioning, it's not OK to ask them about it. "That must have been awful for you Tucker. How are you feeling? Do you need anything?"



This poster can be sourced from the Rainbow Families Council, www.rainbowfamilies.org.au.

Federation's library has an extensive collection of resources for students of all ages and the website www.nswtf.org.au/my-interests/special-interest-groups/gay-lesbian.html has information also. However, for more resources and support, here are some websites:

- resources and support for teachers, young people or parents and families: www.twenty10.org.au
- International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia on May 17: www.dayagainsthomophobia.org/
- Safe Schools Coalition in Victoria (some great resources for schools on the resources page): <http://safeschoolscoalitionvictoria.org.au/>
- For Wear It Purple: <http://wearitpurple.org/>