



GRAI MATTERS

March 2011

Welcome

Letter from the Chair

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Have you paid your membership? We cannot do our work without your support

Welcome to the first issue of GRAI matters for 2011. This newsletter keeps you in touch with the activities of your GRAI Board, who work hard to ensure that the Association is well run and continuing our advocacy on LGBTI elders' issues. We also aim to bring you the latest information about 'gay ageing' issues and events and hope that some of our members will get involved in some of these.

Strategic Planning

The Board met in mid January to work on updating the current strategic plan to confirm our direction for the period 2011 to 2015. The morning was spent reflecting on our achievements, considering our strengths and the challenges we face, and setting out some priority areas to guide the work of the Association. The process is still continuing and once the Board finalizes the plan it will be available for members to access. It has been a fruitful exercise and we have lots to be proud of. This includes the completion of the large scale social research project that produced GRAI's Best Practice Guidelines for aged care accommodation providers in relation to LGBTI clients; a small but steady membership; building up a national and international profile; and submission work at a national level. Our submissions have included contributions to the Australian Human Rights Commission, the Productivity Commission, the Australian Social Inclusion Board, and the Senate Community Affairs Reference Committee. Clearly, for a young Association with a small membership we are tackling some big issues.

Seminars

Earlier this month I sent out an update alerting members to two forthcoming seminars in Perth. One, by National Seniors Australia on the Productivity Commission draft report on *Caring for Older Australians* (see below) and another on an end of life seminar being hosted by the Alzheimer's Association (details in this newsletter). I met Prof Colleen Cartwright, who is delivering the end of life planning seminar, at the International Federation for Ageing conference in Melbourne last year. She has worked in the LGBTI area and is also aware of the work of GRAI and has expressed her concern that most people including LGBTI people have not considered or taken action on end of life issues. These are both very worthwhile events and I hope that members were happy to receive information about them by email.

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Letter from the Chair continued

Health Survey

Members will also have received in the post a copy of the *Private Lives 2 health and wellbeing survey* that comes out of Latrobe University. I was approached to see if we could encourage our members to contribute to this survey to help ensure there was as broad a mix as possible of respondents to this, the largest and broadest LGBTI health survey in Australia. This is the second time the survey has been run. We were not prepared to send our member data base to Latrobe researchers, however we agreed that if they sent a quantity of surveys with reply paid envelopes to Perth, we would label and post them ourselves. Such surveys are vitally important to collect a range of demographic and health data that can then be used for such things as submissions and funding applications. LGBTI health data is rarely routinely gathered and this is itself another area of much advocacy in the LGBTI health area. Most health service providers and funders want to see hard evidence of LGBTI issues before they will consider tackling these issues, yet they rarely ask these questions in their own surveys. It is therefore left to specialist research projects to collect such information. I encourage you to respond to the survey which is also available on line see <http://www.latrobe.edu.au/arcs/shs/news/private-lives-2-survey>

Enjoy the other articles contained within this issue of GRAI Matters. Remember if you wish to contribute to your Association or provide feedback on our activities; please feel free to drop me a line info@grai.org. We always welcome your contributions.

Jude Comfort
Chair

The Productivity Commission is an independent research and advisory body to the Australian Government.

Its current inquiry, 'Caring for Older Australians', offers a unique opportunity for GRAI to have GLBTI issues included in national level planning for the future of the aged care sector.

Productivity Commission Report

You may have seen an update on the Productivity Commission's draft report *Caring for Older Australians* which was released in January this year. This is an important document that is likely to influence how aged care services are delivered in Australia. GRAI put together a submission to this public inquiry and it was pleasing to see that LGBTI issues received attention in the draft report. Some of the gay media picked this up as a very positive take on our concerns. What is less pleasing and was less well reported, is that LGBTI issues were in the main lumped in together with CALD (culturally and linguistically diverse) issues. This shows a lack of understanding of LGBTI issues. Fortunately there is a period for public review of the draft report and GRAI has put together a strong case on how to strengthen the report to better represent LGBTI issues. The following is an extract from our submission on the draft report:

LGBTI not a subset of CALD (Cultural and Linguistically Diverse)

The tendency of the Draft Report to subsume LGBTI issues as a 'cultural difference' comparable to CALD issues is, we feel, problematic and risks misleading those concerned with aged care as to the scale and nature of LGBTI issues.

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Productivity Commission Report continued

We note that although CALD communities are dealing with language and cultural barriers, they are not struggling against centuries-old discriminatory 'moral' codes enshrined in religious texts and discriminatory secular laws. CALD elders are not placed in the invidious position of having to pretend they are 'someone else' to avoid overt or covert discrimination. LGBTI elders live with a fear of homophobia - if not actual experience of discrimination - from staff, residents, health professionals, agencies, and indeed the wider aged care system which, by being complicit in maintaining LGBTI invisibility, discriminates by neglect (GRAI 2010:17).

The deep-seated nature of homophobia (fear of homosexuals) and heteronormativity (the presumption and privileging of heterosexual orientation) and the damage this continues to wreak, needs frank and specialized attention. We commend the Draft Report in highlighting LGBTI issues: this is an important step in combating the general invisibility of LGBTI elders in the aged care sector. However, we recommend that the Final Report be constructed to make a clear distinction between CALD and LGBTI issues, thus promoting a more appropriate and separate appraisal of the different problems associated with each community.

The review process also allows for some face to face meetings with the Commissioners who will be visiting Perth in early April. We have secured a time to meet with them to again emphasise our concerns. It will really be a 'watch this space' to see how the final report addresses LGBTI issues. It was very pleasing to see that there are several other organisations including the National LGBTI Health Alliance who also put in strong submissions. If you wish to read the draft report (over 300 pages) or some of the submissions (over 500) go to <http://www.pc.gov.au/projects/inquiry/aged-care>

Jude Comfort

First national project funded by galfa

The Gay and Lesbian Foundation of Australia (GALFA) is a charitable foundation whose purpose is to provide funds for charitable activities and/or organizations which have as their main purpose the good and betterment of LGBTI people and allied communities, in Australia. Galfa is a relatively new initiative, and it is exciting that they have just announced their first grant offering.

This first grant, of \$10,000 is going to Pflag Australia, to support and resource ten emerging regional PFlag groups around the country. This will provide brochures, advertising and resources for local coordinators over the next two years.

Galfa relies on donations and bequests. While bequests are more of a long term plan, donations are more immediate and can be done at any time. Small automatic monthly donations can be made via galfa's Seed Corn campaign. If you would like to support galfa, note that donations are **tax deductible** and can be made directly via galfa's website at: www.galfa.org.au/donations

Just who I am

This article first appeared in *Alzheimer's Association Australia*, Jan/Feb 2011

Debbie Sinclair-Lane is a 51 year old executive nurse manager at St Michael's Residential Care, a private stand-alone aged care facility in North Perth.

She recently became a board member of GRAI.

Sinclair-Lane describes herself as 'an openly gay facility manager'.

'I'm probably the only openly gay facility manager in WA,' she jokes, referring to the popular comedy sketch from BBC's *Little Britain* series which featured a character who claimed to be 'the only gay in the village'.

'I got involved with GRAI about six months ago,' says Sinclair Lane. 'I knew Jude Comfort from the gay and lesbian community. But I hadn't had anything to do with GRAI until someone in my book group suggested I speak to Jude about the research she was leading [into the preparedness of the retirement and residential aged care sector in WA to respond to the needs and expectations of elderly gays].

Sinclair-Lane says St Michael's does not currently have any openly gay residents but it's a subject she is prepared to raise with all new residents and existing residents too, should the need arise.

As part of the 2010 Pride celebrations, St Michael's held an open day for members of the gay and lesbian community.

'It was a late decision so there wasn't a lot of notice, in terms of promoting it, but 18 or 19 people came. We had an afternoon tea and wine and cheese. and took a tour around the facility,' says Sinclair-Lane.

'They were most interested in aged care in general - how it works, what's happening in the aged care arena. They all seemed quite comfortable that their needs as a gay couple were pretty normal and would be accepted. Nobody said, 'What can you do for us?'

Education helps

Sinclair-Lane believes formal education for aged care staff about sexual diversity and discrimination is important to encourage a culture of acceptance around changes in the generational needs of the elderly.

'In general, I feel the expression of sexuality in older people and in particular in residential aged care - heterosexual or homosexual - is not valued and accepted.

'I think there is a need for formal training and guidelines or a protocol that people follow. Otherwise, some people are just not in tune with it and might not even think about it,' says Sinclair-Lane.

'At the end of the day, the gay and lesbian community just wants the same as everyone else. We all have different personal needs and preferences as people, regardless of our sexuality. I live in the [suburbs] with my partner of 20 years and I just want that to be respected. This is just who I am.



Debbie Sinclair-Lane, executive nurse manager, St Michael's Residential Care.

Alzheimer's Association of WA is presenting a public forum on End of Life Planning, a topic we generally prefer to avoid, despite its extraordinary importance. This forum is presented by Professor Colleen Cartwright who is an expert in this field and who also has conducted research specifically looking at LGBTI issues.

Please note, that although the forum is free, you do need to register.

END OF LIFE PLANNING FOR PEOPLE WITH DEMENTIA

Free public forum

Tuesday 19 April 2011

Planning for the end of life is critical yet often neglected. Research shows that people who have completed some form of advance care planning are more likely to receive end of life care aligned to their wishes than those who have not, yet 49% of people have not completed any form of advance care planning.

This seminar is based on Professor Colleen Cartwright's recent paper, "Planning for the End of Life for People with Dementia".

Topics covered include legal issues relating to:

- Refusal of treatment;
- Enduring power of attorney;
- Pain control; and
- Terminal sedation.



TIME

6.00pm to 7.30pm
Light refreshments from 5.30pm

VENUE

State Library Theatre, Alexander Library, Perth Cultural Centre

REGISTER

www.alzheimers.org.au or call (08) 9388 2800 (office hours)

Guest Speaker

Professor Colleen Cartwright is Foundation Professor of Aged Services and Director of Aged Services Unit at Southern Cross University. She has extensive teaching and research experience in ageing, ethics and medical decisions at the end of life, with publications in major journals. She designed the Advance Health Directive and Enduring Power of Attorney forms that are part of the Queensland Powers of Attorney Act (1998) and amended those to suit NSW legislative provisions. She has been a member of the Australian Association of Gerontology for more than 20 years.





ACAR includes gay packages

The first community aged care packages specifically for gay seniors are a turning point in aged care

The Australian Government together with Queensland community care provider, Care Connect, recently took an important first step in recognizing and meeting the specific care needs of Australia's ageing gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex community.

In the latest Aged Care Approvals Round (ACAR), Care Connect was allocated 32 care packages (CACP, EACH and EACHD) to address the needs of the ageing gay community in South-East Queensland.

Care Connect is the first provider to apply for, and be allocated, packaged care to specifically meet the needs of GLBTI elders. Care Connect will work in partnership with the Queensland Association of Healthy Communities (QAHC) - previously the Queensland AIDS Council.

A recent discussion paper, *The removal of same-sex discrimination: Implications for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender & intersex aged care*, estimates that the number of gay seniors Australia-wide could be substantial - around 228,000 - and will become 'more visible and prominent' with 'ageing and out' baby boomers.

This paper details challenges this group of Australians represents for the residential and community aged care sectors, and outlines changes that could be made to the standards, accreditation process and complaints investigation mechanisms following the 2008 Federal anti-discrimination legal reforms.

The paper also calls for amendments to the current Residential Aged Care Manual to adequately cater for gay consumers by emphasizing the importance of creating a safe and inclusive environment.

However, in gaining care package funding for GLBTI elders, Care Connect has taken direct action, not waiting for these legal or procedural changes, and hopes its initiative will be taken up by others.

'Care Connect is very pleased that this funding submission was approved and appreciates the opportunity for publicity as this is a hidden need in a hidden population,' said client service manager, Annette Hogan.

The next steps will be to develop an outreach model, with QAHC as point of referral to create a safe environment.

Dr Jo Harrison, an Adelaide-based gerontologist with expertise in gay aged care issues, and co-author of the discussion paper, has welcomed the funding to Care Connect.

'The funding to Care Connect and the partnership with QAHC represent a very significant turning point in aged care in Australia, indicating the Federal Government's recognition that gay older people have special needs and require home support from staff trained in sensitivity. This is a tremendous positive development. It provides a basis on which similar developments could take place across Australia, in the context of a much needed National gay aged care plan.'

Adapted from an article by Megan Stoyles, Aged Care INSITE Feb/Mar 2011

<http://www.agedcareinsite.com.au/pages/section/article.php?s=News&idArticle=19988>