



GRAI MATTERS

September/October 2011

Welcome

Letter from the Chair

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 1 Letter from the Chair
- 2 GRAI Membership
- 3 Annual Report Round-up
- 3 Collecting Stories
- 4 Queensland's LGBTI Aged Care Packages
- 4 GRAI's Pride Events

HAPPY PRIDE!

**There are three
GRAI events
during Pride
month....
(details on page 4).**

**Please put them in
your diary now!**

GRAI Matters Newsletter
GRAI PO Box 715
Mt Lawley, 6929
info@grai.org.au
www.grai.org.au

Welcome to the PRIDE GRAI newsletter. GRAI will have quite a presence at PRIDE, putting ageing in our community on the agenda. We have three great events - two community forums and the WA premier of the LGBTI film 'Gen Silent'. We will also have a stall at Fair Day, so pop past to say hi. More details are inside this newsletter: they promise to be fun and I hope that our members can support these events.

GRAI AGM

In late August we held a very successful AGM, which was successful both in attendance (approximately 20 people) and trying a new structure (having an afternoon time spot with a guest speaker). There was no shortage of good conversation or food. The afternoon kicked off with a tour of St Michael's Residential Care, the location of the AGM. Paul Van Lieshout-Hunt from Pride and by far the youngest member at the AGM, delivered a thought provoking talk entitled "Reaching Out: Building Community with GLBTI Elders" which resulted in questions and discussion especially on how to link older and younger people and also the experiences of growing up gay today as compared with the experiences of older members of our community

The AGM also saw the election of two new members to the Board and the retirement of one existing member. Dean Smith and Brad McKay join the Board bringing great skills to their positions which will add to the expertise of the Board. We say farewell to Malcolm Fialho who has been a stalwart with the Board and a GRAI member from the start. Most recently Malcolm held the position of joint secretary. Our constitution limits the time someone can stay on the Board to ensure that there are new ideas coming through. So Malcolm, hopefully this is more like a sabbatical and we will see you back on the Board sometime in the future.

At the September meeting of the Board, executive positions were elected. I was happy to accept the position of Chair for a further year, and thank the board for their continued support of me in this position.

Continued page 2

Letter from the Chair continued

June Lowe will take on the position as deputy chair and continue on as newsletter editor, Brett Tizard will continue as secretary, Stuart Pekin as treasurer. Deb Sinclair-Lane and Leonie Stickland continue on as ordinary board members.

Meeting the Minister

In October, the LGBTI Health Alliance and ACON will be convening a round-table meeting in Sydney to talk about ageing in the LGBTI community with representatives from each state. We will be representing WA and indeed are seen as a key player in this meeting. In an exciting move, the meeting will also include a session with the Minister for Mental Health and Ageing, Mark Butler, who has recently had the final Productivity Commission's Report on ageing in Australia presented to him. He has indicated that the Government is looking at various reforms in aged care. Amongst other things, GRAI will be pushing for a coordinated approach to mandatory LGBTI competency training across the aged care sector.

Pride activities

So while the Board continues with its work in promoting equality of LGBTI aged care, we will also be taking time out to enjoy PRIDE offerings. The GRAI PRIDE forum 'Talking Generations' will be a relaxed cafe afternoon and an opportunity for ideas to come from the community on how we can indeed look at being more inclusive of all generations but especially of our older members. This is a challenge when there is definitely a perception, and perhaps a reality, that the gay community is youth focused. I am confident though that we have much in common and to offer each other across the generations. So why not come along and be challenged to come up with some actions to achieve this.

Our second forum, 'Fair Go for GLBT Elders', will discuss the factors underlying the widespread 'invisibility' of our GLBT elders and the obstacles to confronting discrimination. This event, co-hosted by The Greens WA, is neatly timed to combine with the screening of 'Gen Silent' at the nearby Paradiso. Please come along to this excellent film - the Stuart Maddox documentary that looks at the lives of older LGBTI people in the USA. This has taken out a swag of film awards and you may remember this from the launch of our Lotterywest grant a few years ago, where we showed a snippet from the rough cut. This film is part of the PRIDE film festival and is also a GRAI fundraiser. Pre-film wine and nibbles will allow another opportunity to catch up. See you there!

Happy Pride!

Jude Comfort
Chair

GRAI Membership

**If you wish to join GRAI or
renew your membership,
you can do this at our stall
at PRIDE FAIRDAY.**

**Alternatively, check out
our website:
www.grai.org.au**

Round-up from GRAIs Annual Report

This has been another productive year for GRAI, with a strong focus on advocacy. We have contributed to a number of influential inquiries, succeeding in moving GLBTI ageing firmly out of the closet and onto the tables of decision-makers.

This work has included submissions to the Productivity Commission's *Caring for Older Australians Report* and also meeting with the Commissioners during their Perth hearings in April 2011. Pleasingly, the final report included most of our recommendations, although we would have liked them to go further and to stipulate that LGBTI cultural competency training needs to be undertaken by all aged care services. Now we have to work hard to get these recommendations implemented and also to push for these mandatory training measures.

GRAI made three other submissions this year:

1. To the Australian Human Rights Commission Community Consultation on protection from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and sex and/or gender identity.

2. To the Australian Social Inclusion Board's Community Consultation, titled *Breaking the Cycle of Disadvantage*.
3. To the Department of Health and Ageing on their Draft Revised Standards for Residential Aged Care.

In all cases, our submissions sought to emphasise that older LGBTI people are disadvantaged in aged care settings due to entrenched and historical experiences of discrimination and the operation of a heteronormative aged care industry. These submissions are a vital part of GRAIs work towards making aged care policies and aged care services inclusive and safe for GLTBI people.

In June 2011, *Out in Perth* published an article by Jude Comfort discussing how the wider LGBTI community might respond to the needs of older GLBTI members. This sparked a great deal of interest and has led to talks with other organisations who may work with us on this issue. Importantly, it also inspired our Pride forum 'Talking Generations' (see page 4) where we hope we can come up with some creative and practical ideas on ways to progress this vital community-building.

Getting older? Send your stories to inspire others

Age Discrimination Commissioner, Susan Ryan, is interested in hearing positive stories about ageing and sharing them with Australia through the Commission website.

"I think that, by sharing positive stories about older people and finding ways to remind the public how much older people continue to contribute to our community, we can start to address attitudes that result in age discrimination" Commissioner Ryan said.

Ms Ryan has invited people to send in the name, photo and a 300 word story about an older person and their achievements, whether that is another person or themselves.

To find out how to send your stories and photos, go to: www.humanrights.gov.au/age/send-us-your-story.html

Wouldn't it be great to inundate them with a fine stock of stories about GLBTI elders?

Queensland leads the way: Community care agency offers LGBTI Aged Care Packages

For the first time in Australia, a community care agency is being funded to deliver aged care packages to cater for LGBTI clients. The agency, Community Connect, will offer home-based care packages in South East Queensland.

Care Connect takes an outreach approach, employing case managers from the community. In 2008 a manager recognised the need for a specialised focus for GLBTI clients, and Care Connect has worked for the past 3 years negotiating with government departments to gain support to deliver this service. These home-based care packages will be delivered by workers skilled to be fully sensitive to the challenges faced by the older LGBTI community, many of whom have led largely closeted lives.

This important initiative responds to the fact that 46% of GLBTI elders are living alone (compared to 23% of mainstream elders) and more often rely on 'families of choice' for support. GLBTI people face additional challenges in ageing, with an increased prevalence of health and mental health issues and a well-documented reluctance to approach health professionals or formal care providers. Hopefully, Care Connect can succeed in finally overcoming these barriers to accessing good support services for their clients.

Launch

Care Connect's LGBTI community aged care service will be launched in Brisbane on 2 November 2011. Graham Lovelock and Steve Stinger, both founder members of GRAI, will be in Brisbane fortuitously in time for this event. They will represent GRAI and pass on our very good wishes to Care Connect and this ground-breaking new venture.

GRAI Invites You to our Pride Events

Talking Generations: GLBTI conversations across the generations

'Talking Generations' creates a space for conversations in a café setting, to explore ways we can build community between young and older GLTBI people.

Join us for an afternoon of creative ideas. How can we best build connections to benefit everyone, but especially to support our seniors?

Gold coin donation. Full café service available for purchase.

Sun 23 Oct, 2pm - 5pm | Coode St Café, 24 Coode St, Mt Lawley

GRAI & Greens WA present: Fair Go for GLBTI Elders

GLBTI elders remain largely invisible? Why are many of our elders going back into the closet? What changes to the law are needed and what can be done to create a safe and inclusive environment? Please join this interactive forum to discuss these issues. *Entry free.*

Sun 30 Oct, 3 - 4.40pm | Community Room, Northbridge Piazza, cnr James/Lake Sts

Pride Film Festival & GRAI Fundraiser: 'Gen Silent'

An Award-winning film documenting the lives of older GLBTI people – the generation that fought the hardest to come out and is now going back in the closet.

Tickets \$20 – includes pre-film wine and nibbles, hosted by Pride Inc.

Sun 30 Oct, 4.30 refreshments, 5.30 film screening | Cinema Paradiso, Northbridge