
GRAI Matters

Winter, 2015

Interdenominational Breakfast

Literary Lesbians

Community Visitors Scheme

Resilient Individuals



Right to Belong beyond halfway

Letter from the Chair

The rewards of working with GRAI lie in the diversity of the work, and seeing how all the different levels dovetail and complement each other.

At a national level, there are phone link ups with the Alliance and national partners in the training project, and participation in the government’s Working Group on ageing and aged care for LGBTI people. We are also collaborating with Val’s Cafe (La Trobe Uni) to stage the 2nd National LGBTI Ageing and Aged Care Conference being held in Melbourne in October. Though these link ups one gets a sense of machinations at work in other states and hears of activities that can inspire similar actions here.

Meanwhile, at a state level, our training project Right To Belong is our key conduit to the aged care sector, and both informs and is informed by our national discussions. Trainers are also sometimes in the firing line and need to be well-grounded in both the lived experience of LGBTI elders and also political realities that govern aged care standards. The training project is giving GRAI greater exposure within the aged care sector, and we are often asked to speak at other forums. In May and June we gave presentations to The Women’s Council, Bentley Health Services, Independent Living Centre and the WA Country Health Service.

We are also seeing how this activity starts to play out ‘on the ground’, affecting the daily lives of LGBTI seniors. Some are receiving special LGBTI HACC packages, which were created after our (and others’) lobbying efforts for law reform. We recently heard a good news story of a care provider who is doing amazing work supporting a trans senior.

Finally, it is our community connections that authenticate our work and make it so rewarding. We recently received a phone call from a social worker who was looking for a support group for a client – a 90-year old lesbian. Naturally we were thrilled and honoured to make this contact, which has turned out very happily

with a great connection being made with a GRAI member living close by.

Our social events are a real source of joy to me and enrich our whole organisation. These events are often modest, but the effects are cumulative. For example, in May we celebrated our Office Warming/Sundowner to show off our new premises. (page 3) Importantly, there are always those great anecdotes that are shared – the little stories that validate our training and advocacy. Meanwhile, Lesbians who Lunch continues to meet monthly (see page 11) while Prime Timers do a fabulous job of organising a range of activities for the guys, and we are pleased to help promote their calendar (see page 7).

Politics and the personal do, in fact, mix quite beautifully: our conversations with politicians, aged care sector CEOs and staff, and friends in the community, build a host of mutual benefits, as well as making for an interesting life!

I hope you enjoy the reports in this edition of GRAI Matters, and remember, if you would like to contribute either a pithy thought or a longer article, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Warm regards, June

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Right to Belong Passed the Midway Point

Our Right to Belong training project is now well past its midway point. By the end of July we had delivered 25 training sessions (we are funded by the federal government to deliver 44) and have confirmed bookings for a further ten. With a steady stream of requests, clearly the funding will not come close to meeting the demand, and after the government funding runs out we will be looking at delivering a different model of training in which we will be charging a fee for service.

Susan Harwood, who has been the project coordinator, left us in April, to take up a position overseas. We sincerely thank Susan for her professionalism in getting the project off to an excellent start and wish her well in her new endeavour. As of May, June Lowe has taken on the coordination responsibilities. As June has been involved in the project's inception and on-going administration, the transition has been relatively seamless. The Project Management Group continues to oversee the project and provide valuable support.

On 29 June, we delivered a special training session to the Quality Agency, the Agency responsible for auditing aged care services, making sure they are meeting the standards for accreditation. In future, they will be asking facilities how they are demonstrating LGBTI inclusivity in their organisation. This was an important session, as Quality Agency staff is, effectively, the gatekeeper to the legislation – holding aged care services accountable to legal (and community) expectations.

Also in the month of June, a short presentation was given to a meeting of the WA Country Health Services (WACHS). WACHS managers from around the state were gathered for a workshop in Perth, so it was a perfect opportunity to invite country participation in the training project. Following this, we have received requests for training sessions delivered by video conference, which we are investigating.

The Right To Belong training sessions continue to receive glowing testimonials from participants, with commonly heard comments like, 'it was a real eye opener' and, 'It will be very helpful in my work, I feel more confident to work with LGBTI clients'. Overwhelmingly, participants also say how enjoyable they found the experience, obviously relishing the experience of, in one trainee's words, 'challenging (my) own perceptions and values'.

If your organisation is interested in receiving Right to Belong inclusivity training, please contact June Lowe: chair@grai.org.au or phone 9383 7753.



Course participants, Dyrandra Aged Care, Kellerberrin

Notice of AGM and call for GRAI Board Members

As our AGM approaches, we invite GRAI members to consider nominating for a position on our Board.

We are keen to hear from you if you are interested in our work and would like to be involved in helping with events, promotion, fundraising, grants, research, policy, community outreach, social media, or any other contribution you feel you could offer - please contact us at info@grai.org.au

GRAI AGM 2015

Sat 31 October | 2pm-4pm

Southcare, 54 Bickley Cres, Manning
Save the date!

GRAI AGMs are not boring - join us to celebrate our achievements, enjoy fine refreshments and good company!

Bouquets to Baptcare Victoria

Bouquets to Baptcare Victoria for our favourite document of the year – their excellent publication ‘Safe, inclusive & person-centred care for LGBTI seniors’. Prepared by Social Policy Officer, Cheryl Fairclough, this is the perfect primer for any aged care service embarking on their LGBTI inclusivity journey.

It succinctly explains that LGBTI seniors face barriers to accessing relevant care and that in order to achieve equality and consistency of outcomes, extra efforts are needed to deliver LGBTI-inclusive care. The issues around the need for LGBTI inclusivity are clearly laid out, and solutions are presented as simply normal expectations within the organisation’s pre-existing ethics of care. The report ends with Baptcare’s six-point Policy Response, providing a good template for others to consider.

I was interested to find out about the publication’s genesis and recently spoke on the phone with author Cheryl Fairclough, together with Baptcare’s Manager of Mission Development, Rev Olivia MacLean. They explained that although, over a number of years, several people within Baptcare Victoria had progressed work on LGBTI inclusivity, the concept was still far from ‘normative’. Rev MacLean took this as her starting point and worked to gain trust and understanding with key individuals at many levels of the organisation. This was a challenging task, as ‘Baptists are very individual’. Rev MacLean speaks with quiet clarity about her modus operandi: ‘You hold your position clearly,

articulate from love and your best values, and do your best to hold it maturely’.

Meanwhile, Cheryl Fairclough was very pleased to find a strong body of external research on which to base her report (including GRAI and Catherine Barrett). Then, alliances were built, and encouragement and direction gained from human rights activists (with a theological background) and individuals and organisations from the LGBTI community. Fearing the risk of an ambivalent response, Cheryl was determined to produce an authoritative paper that made a very strong case. She succeeded: when the policy paper was finally discussed by the Board, there was 30 minutes of positive discussion and just one word change.

We appreciate that it takes courage, especially for an organisation with a faith-background, to take the lead on LGBTI issues. They must confront the risk of attack from both the LGBTI community (if they don’t get it right) and also from conservative churches. However, Rev MacLean is confident that they ‘have created something truthful that we can back’.

Baptcare’s important work deserves wide coverage in the sector and we are delighted that Rev MacLean will speak of their experiences at a breakfast in October (see below) - June Lowe

http://www.baptcare.org.au/advocacy/Advocacy/Documents/BaptcareLGBTISeniors_WEB.pdf



Invitation to an interdenominational breakfast with

Reverend Olivia MacLean

Manager, Mission Development Baptcare Victoria

Friday 9 October 2015

7.30am – 9.00am

Southcare, 54 Bickley Cres Manning

Free Event | Breakfast provided

RSVP: Eventbrite

www.eventbrite.com/e/resolutions-faith-lgbti-people-inclusive-aged-care-tickets-17918129608

Thanks to the following supporters of this event

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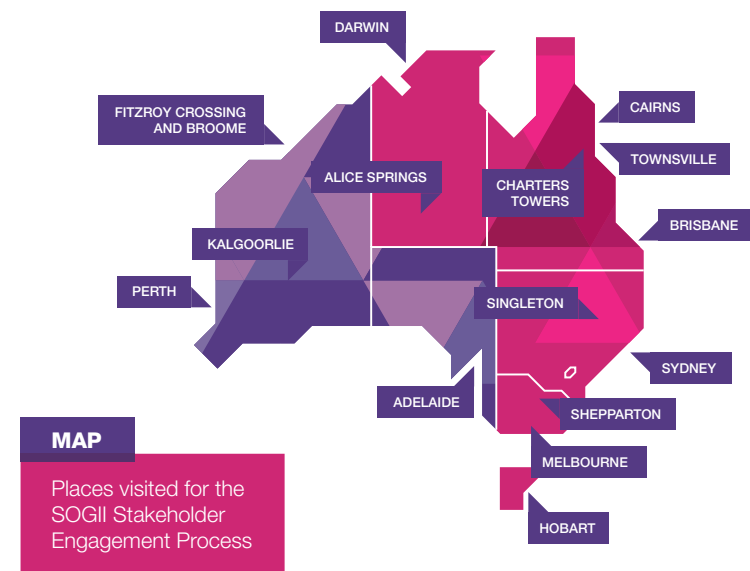
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Resilient Individuals Report

The Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) has just published its 2015 National Consultation Report ‘Resilient Individuals: Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Intersex (SOGII) Rights’. This wide-ranging report is designed to ‘give voice to the lived experiences of LGBTI Australians’.



The report outlines a ‘road map for inclusion’, recommending a number of legal reforms which should be undertaken to ensure all Australians are treated equally and fairly by the law and the government. Changes to the Marriage Act 1976 (Cth) head the list, but also a number of State and Territory reforms are recommended, including, for Western Australia, legislation to expunge criminal records of historic homosexual consensual sex offences.

This is of particular concern to older men who, if convicted under historical laws, still carry the stigma of a criminal record that can continue to cause emotional stress, and also can impact on employment and travel to some countries. Both NSW and Victoria have already put in place measures to expunge these criminal records.

The Human Rights Commission has committed to a number of initiatives to foster change, including working with universities, vocational education providers and professional bodies, to promote SOGII diversity

training in medical, health science and health courses. In time, this will be of great benefit, especially to older LGBTI people accessing health care services, to find health and social services that are sensitive to (their existence and) their care needs.

The concept of ‘unconscious bias’ in service provision was flagged, with many participants observing that healthcare systems operate with the assumption that clients are heterosexual, creating an uncomfortable situation where they are continually needing to ‘out’ themselves in response to heterosexist questions or processes.

GRAIs experience tells us that the same situation is daily played out in aged care settings, with recipients generally quietly deciding to ‘lie by omission’.

Everything is all right now?

Anyone who believes that LGBTI people now experience life ‘on a level playing field’ would be surprised to read some of the statistics from the report’s survey.

	Yes	No
<i>Have you ever experienced violence or bullying on the basis of your sexual orientation, gender identity or intersex status?</i>	72%	28%
<i>Have you ever felt you wanted to, but felt unable to disclose your sexual orientation in the workplace?</i>	62%	38%
<i>Have you ever felt uncomfortable disclosing your gender identity in a clinical healthcare setting?</i>	42%	58%

These statistics tell a story of accumulated minor stresses that continue to shape people’s psyches and social responses, and importantly, are contributing to the debilitating invisibility of older LGBTI people.

The report’s coverage of aged care services is unfortunately scant and fails to pick up on an important piece of unfinished business in law reform: although faith-

based aged care service providers cannot discriminate against LGBTI clients (after amendments to the Sex Discrimination Act, 2013), these faith based services remain exempt from anti-discrimination law with regards to their LGBTI employees. Until this is amended, it is hard for the community to have confidence that these organisations can be LGBTI inclusive.

However, we commend the Human Rights Commissioner, Tim Wilson, and his team for their work on this

extensive report and look forward to their on-going work to protect the rights of LGBTI Australians.

Review by June Lowe

To access the report:

https://www.humanrights.gov.au/sites/default/files/document/publication/SOGII%20Rights%20Report%202015_Web_Version.pdf

Office Warming Sundowner

GRAI is now comfortably ensconced in our new premises at Southcare: files filed, pictures on walls, it is a welcoming place from which to work. Our Office Warming-Sundowner (13 May) was a great gathering of GRAI supporters - a tour was taken, premises admired, toasts were raised and ideas about future possibilities flowed freely. Thank you, everyone, for your input, and special thanks, again, to Southcare for your generosity in hosting us. Long may we collaborate!



Celebrating 80!

19 July 2015: A large crowd of friends gathered to celebrate Dave Kelly's 80th birthday. *The Spookie Men of the West* serenaded Dave and his guests with a heartfelt rendition of the Lennon-McCartney classic "And I Love Him" [sic], followed by a beautiful composition by Stephen Taberner, "The Sweetest Kick in the Heart". Gorgeous harmonies perfectly suited to the occasion. Warmest congratulations Dave on reaching 80 rich years.

Photo: Dave Kelly (r) with his partner Colin Beasley



Community Visitors Scheme

As the manager of Volunteers and Community Services, at Southcare, I welcome my new neighbour, June Lowe, GRAI Chair, who has recently moved into the office next door. We have had several opportunities to chat about how we can work together to improve the quality of life for older members of the LGBTI community.

Ageing can be a lonely time for many ageing Australians and probably more so for members of special needs groups, including the LGBTI community, who may be more socially isolated. Southcare is an Auspice for the Community Visitor's Scheme (CVS) for the South East metro area of Perth. The scheme was introduced in 1992 and has the by-line "Friends for Older People". Funded by the Commonwealth Government, our job is to recruit volunteers to visit people who are recipients of Government Subsidised Aged Care services (residential aged care and home care packages) and have been identified as being lonely or at risk of becoming isolated. The CVS includes members of special needs groups under the Aged Care Act. A carer or coordinator may notice that a client rarely has visits from friends or relatives, or whose frailty, mobility, communication impairments, cultural background or gender identity prevents them from joining in social or leisure events, and a community visitor is recommended.

Part of my job is to manage and implement the CVS for Southcare and after discussions with June, I can understand that LGBTI seniors may feel uneasy about participating in schemes that have historically been provided by to mainstream recipients. However, aged care recipients have always come from a variety of different social and cultural backgrounds and I have successfully recruited community visitors from all backgrounds. The CVS matches community volunteers with aged care recipients and provides one-to-one visits on a regular basis within a residential care setting or in private homes for people receiving home care

packages. A new initiative has been group visits in aged care homes, where several volunteers meet with one or two residents who may play board games, listen to music or just have lively group conversations. Any care recipient whose quality of life could be improved by the companionship of a regular community visitor can be referred to the CVS by their aged care provider.

I would like to share an example of a success story from some years ago when we matched a community friend to Henny, an elderly Dutch lady. Henny spoke and understood very little English, so she wasn't able to



Vicki Morrell, Manager Volunteers and Community Services, SouthCare

have much connection with the outside world through the radio or TV. She had poor mobility following a stroke and moved into an aged care facility. Her devoted husband visited her regularly, but when he passed away she had no visitors. An advertisement on the Volunteering WA website enabled us to recruit a community friend who spoke Dutch and visited Henny regularly – they played Scrabble and enjoyed many happy hours chatting. Henny’s mental and physical health improved greatly, allowing her to participate in some of the social activities offered at the home.

Members of any special needs group, including LGBTI people, should not miss out on this wonderful program that brings so much pleasure to both the recipient and to the volunteer friend. We understand that some clients prefer not to identify themselves as LGBTI due to historical sensitivities, but with strict policies about confidentiality, together with a wider acceptance and understanding in the community, this concern is becoming less acute. Southcare works closely with aged care providers and when a person has been identified as being lonely or at risk of isolation, we find a

volunteer who has the same interests or background. I visit both parties individually and then introduce the volunteer to their new friend. Once it is established that there is a connection, they are left to make the arrangements for future visits. The community visitor keeps in regular contact with me and any concerns are smoothed out if they occur.

Although establishing a match on the grounds of sexuality and/or gender identity may or may not be a priority of the recipient, it would be wonderful to have a small pool of LGBTI volunteers to draw on if/when such a request arises.

Volunteering as a community visitor can be a rewarding experience. By befriending an older person, volunteers have a chance to make a really positive difference to the care recipient’s life – as well as their own. If you need any further information about how to access the scheme or how you can become a community friend, please contact: Vicki Morrell at Southcare, Manning:

Phone: 9450 6233 or email: Vicki.m@southcare.org.au
- www.southcare.org.au

Keep Calm and come for the afternoon tea and cake

Perth’s social club for gay and bisexual men, Prime Timers, is a lively place of connecting and community. GRAI is so pleased to have links with Prime Timers - ours is a relatively small community and having the structures and environments where we can engage and socialise are so important.

Prime Timers celebrated their 12th Anniversary in June, putting on a free lunch for members at The Royal on the Waterfront in East Perth, acclaimed as ‘very impressive’ by the members! Prime Timers President, Chris Hart, says they usually consider June their ‘birthday month’ - although this is actually their ‘second incarnation’, as the first Prime Timers originally set up about 18 years ago, but folded after a few years. Some of the original members are still involved, including Wally, who puts together Prime Timers’ monthly newsletter.

Prime Timers attracts a steady stream of new members, usually through their website. Activities include the monthly meeting with a guest speaker, a book club, a coffee club and dinner club, and they have just added a new lunch club which meets on the fourth Tuesday of the month at ‘The Saint’ (Saint Georges Hotel, Innaloo). Check out the Prime Timers website for details.

Coming up: In addition to their regular activities, Prime Timers are planning a bus trip in the Spring-time. Also, September’s meeting will feature a bit of floral fun with a flower arranging competition...

For further information: <http://www.primetimerswa.com/>

LGBTI Aged Care in Melbourne

A brand new aged care facility dedicated to LGBTI people and their friends will be built in the heart of Prahran.



The development run by Victorian aged care provider Lifeview, will be located one block from Prahran railway station, and walking distance to trams and the iconic Chapel Street.

“This is the biggest and most exciting project Lifeview has been involved in and it is our belief this development will be the first inner-city offering of this type in Melbourne, and possibly Australia, by a current approved aged care provider,” Lifeview Director Peter Reilly said.

“The issue [was] finding a footprint large enough in the right area that has easy access to the communities that we’re speaking for, with easy access to public transport and precincts such as Chapel Street, where there is a strong community presence and community feel,” he said.

The recently secured site of 2,662sqm cost the developers \$20 million, and will house both retirement living apartments and aged care living, as well as retail spaces and a café on the ground floor.

“This development will ensure aging LGBTI consumers can access care and services where they are valued, and where staff understand their needs, all whilst re-

maining in the vibrant inner city environment in which they currently live and socialise,” Reilly added.

However, don’t pack your bags just yet: this project is still on the drawing board, with Lifeview having started work with local architects looking at options for the site’s design.

Adapted from:

<http://gaynewsnetwork.com.au/news/new-lgbti-aged-care-facility-to-launch-in-melbourne-17231.html>

Peter Dickson’s Dream in Rural Ballan

For roughly half his life, Peter Dickson has been planning where he would live in his twilight years. But in recent times, it's become something of an obsession.

The former chef and property investor, who now works full-time with some of Melbourne's most vulnerable homeless people as a tenancy worker with the Salvation Army, isn't your typical developer.

"People think developers are multimillionaires, but a lot aren't," he says. "I'm known as the 'Two-Minute Noodle Queen' at work."

The idea to develop a gay-friendly community for older people was developed, as all good ideas are, around a dinner table with friends - almost three decades ago. Although the rights of LGBTI people have come a long way since then, Dickson says discrimination as



they age and become more dependent is still a fear for many.

"You are born in the closet, and then come out of the closet, and when you're older you go back into the closet."

In 2007, Dickson bought a 19-acre (7.7-hectare) block of land in rural Ballan, an hour north-west of Melbourne. Without the expertise to design the village himself, he has since surrounded himself with experts and consulted widely about the award-winning concept. So far, he has received 350 expressions of interest, and there are eight units already at a pre-contract stage.

Dickson emphasises that anybody of any age can live there, as long as they are respectful of all others. But it

is set up for older people with services such as an on-call nurse, to ensure residents are supported to live there as long as possible.

Given the more flexible rules on who can live there, it isn't technically a retirement village - younger partners can live there and residents can continue to work if they desire.

There have been many hurdles delaying the progress of this development, but Dixon hopes to see the first soil turned by the end of the year. Still too early to pack those bags, we think.

Adapted from:

<http://www.theage.com.au/victoria/peter-dicksons-dream-of-developing-a-nursing-home-for-lgbti-people-is-close-to-being-realised-20150404-1mb3sn.html>

SURVEY: Understanding The Needs And Experiences Of Older LGBTI Carers And The Carers Of Older LGBTI People In Australia

We know that older LGBTI people have had many unique and diverse historical experiences. We also know that older LGBTI people are carers. However, we don't know how sexual orientation, gender identity or intersex status impact on the experiences and needs of older LGBTI carers and the carers of older LGBTI people.

Val's Cafe, at the Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society at La Trobe University, together with Carers Australia, are partnering to explore the experiences of older LGBTI carers and the carers of older LGBTI Australians.

We are seeking participants for an online survey and confidential interviews. To be eligible participants must be:

- An older LGBTI carer or the carer of an older LGBTI person
- A current Australian resident
- In a carer role currently or have been in a carer role in the last two years.

For the purposes of this project we define 'older' as 55 years or more. Caring may include unpaid help and support in any of the daily activities of the person being cared for. You may be a friend, partner, family member – carers can be anyone. Information from this study will be used to develop education and resources for aged care and carer support services. For more information, contact the project researcher: Dr Catherine Barrett: 03 9479 8702 |

c.barrett@latrobe.edu.au

This project has been approved by La Trobe University Human Ethics Sub-Committee (approval # S15/5) and funded by an Aged Care Service Improvement and Healthy Ageing Grant provided by the Australian Department of Social Services.

Advocare Launches Elder Abuse Hotline

The right to be treated with respect, have choices, be and feel safe and live without exploitation, abuse or neglect are rights to which every Australian is entitled.

However, for thousands of senior Western Australians, in fact as many as 1 in 20, it's a much grimmer picture.

Elder abuse is a social epidemic that involves the mistreatment of older people, typically in their homes, at the hands of family, friends and neighbours.

Abuse can range from financial mistreatment, psychological pressures, neglect, physical or sexual assault. Common examples include the misuse of another person's money, living or taking control of a person's home and verbal threats, bullying and harassment.

Greg Mahney is the Chief Executive Officer of Advocare, the peak elder abuse support agency in Western Australia. In the years he has spent dealing with such cases, Mr Mahney has seen how easily an older person can become vulnerable to abusive situations.

He stated "It may be due to the lack of understanding with technology, medication issues, sexual orientation or perhaps they are too trusting and don't want to create any problems".

This coupled with fear and shame, often prevent an older person asking for help or not knowing who to turn to.

The elder abuse helpline is the first of its kind in Western Australia and offers older people experiencing abuse an easy way to access information, support and resources to address elder abuse.

Staffed by professional advocates, the service is confidential (you can remain anonymous if you wish), free of charge and provides someone to talk to, support and advice on options.

The helpline can be accessed by calling 1300 724 679, 8.30am – 4.30pm, Monday to Friday.

SURVEY: Intersex Australians

Dr Tiffany Jones is conducting a survey of AUSTRALIANS BORN WITH CONGENITAL VARIATIONS IN SEX CHARACTERISTICS (Intersex/ DSD/ hormonal, chromosomal or other biological variations/conditions). Some terms with which you might be familiar to describe these variations are: Intersex, DSD/ Disorder of Sex Development/ Diverse Sex Development, atypical reproductive or sex development condition or variation whether hormonal, chromosomal, or otherwise biological (e.g. CAIS, Klinefelters, Turners, PCOS and many others).

This project has been developed under the advice of a Reference Group including Morgan Carpenter of Organisation Intersex International (OII) Australia; Bonnie Hart of The Androgen Insensitivity Syndrome (AIS) Support Group Australia, and Dr Gávi Ansara of the National LGBTI Health Alliance. If you are interested in telling us about your experiences of health, education and social supports, please go to the following link which goes into detail about the survey and what it involves, and how this data will be used: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/ausvariations>

This project has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee of the University of New England (Approval No HE15-044 Valid to 1st April 2016).

Dr Tiffany Jones, School of Education, UNE, 02 6773 3847 | <http://www.une.edu.au/staff-profiles/tjones35>

(Literary) Lesbians Who Lunch

Lesbians Who Lunch was initiated by GRAI at the end of 2014 out of an identified need to provide a friendly place for older lesbians to socialise. Usually this is a monthly, nomadic lunch (in that the lunch spot tends to move around the metropolitan area) and has proved a successful venture, now with a core of regulars plus a warm invitation to new women.

The event in June was a treat which reached out to a slightly wider audience as we hosted a special lunch at Southcare, Manning, with South Australian (ex WA) lesbian author Mag Merrilees. Nearly 30 older lesbians gathered for the occasion, many coming early and staying late — the buzz of conversation reluctantly interrupted by the food-ready announcement! But one good thing replaced another as delicious dishes were served by our great caterer, Ros Mansfield.

Our guest of honour, Mag Merrilees regaled us with several chapters from *Fables Queer and Familiar*, her latest book of lesbian exploits. This is gentle-chuckle humour, and our audience related fondly to the book's protagonists – lesbian grannies, a cohort rarely represented in literature.

The cheerful readings warmed the winters' afternoon, punctuated by an irresistible dessert. Finally, we settled back again into pleasant socialising – a mix of old and new acquaintances with an important shared culture. Opportunities for this group of women to meet up are all too rare, and much appreciated.

Thank you Mag, for returning to WA to share your latest work with us and providing an excellent reason for a lunch!

Invitation to older lesbians:

For monthly dates and venues for Lesbians Who Lunch, check the GRAI website www.grai.org.au or contact June on 9383 7753 or chair@grai.org.au.

Mag Merrilees

For those of you who do not know Mag, a short introduction is in order. She was born and raised in Western Australia and has a deep attachment to the West through history, family, friendships and an understanding of the country. This is evident in her first published novel, *The First Week*, which is set in the South West and skilfully explores themes of belonging and landscape and conflict.

Adelaide is now Mag's adopted city. And it is her base for her writing, which covers her "idiosyncratic essays, which combine memoir, history and social commentary" and also fiction works. It is Mag's life in Adelaide that inspired in part, *Fables*. This started life as the on-line serial blog *Adelaide Days - Tales of Rainbow Life in the Festival City*, which morphed into her latest book *Fables Queer and Familiar*. The book includes fun illustrations from Sydney based artist friend Chia Moan. This is an important book. It is great fun to read, but importantly it is part of that rare breed of fiction that features older lesbians and political lesbians at that. These women grew up in the days of fraught collective meetings, flannelette shirts, shared houses and separatism. There is a paucity of artistic works that feature older lesbians and the important social times they lived through, and now, the lives of these lesbians as they age and have become, in some cases, grandmothers.

If you would like to find out more about Mag Merrilees and her writing go to her website at <http://margaretmerrilees.com/>

Jude Comfort



Conference News

Health in Difference 2015

The National LGBTI Health Alliance is staging the 9th Health in Difference (HiD) Conference in Canberra, from 13-15 August. The HiD conferences provide an important focus on LGBTI issues within a wide range of health-related topics, with mental health and ageing being two important streams. This year, the conference runs over three days, with an extensive program covering what promises to be an array of practical and thought provoking presentations. GRAI Chair, June Lowe, has been invited to reflect on our experiences here in WA, and will be talking about the successes and challenges experienced by the aged care sector on their journey towards LGBTI inclusivity.

For further information about, or to register for the HiD Conference, visit:

<http://healthindifference.org/category/hid-2015/page/9/>

Second National LGBTI Ageing and Aged Care Conference

Exciting news for everyone interested in LGBTI ageing and aged care issues – the Second National Conference is coming up, on 26-27 October in Melbourne.

Hosted by Val's Cafe (La Trobe University) and supported by others across Australia (including GRAI), this promises to be a great experience – with some unique elements in the program and a strong commitment to achieve a high participation rate of older LGBTI people. The conference last year was full of heart-warming moments as the voices of older LGBTI community were heard alongside some inspirational success stories from the aged care industry and commitments from policy makers. This year's highlights will include a focus on 'The Power of Aged Care' and 'Intersections of Religion and LGBTI inclusive care'.

In the spirit of 'nothing about us without us', GRAI joins the push for facilitating the involvement of LGBTI seniors (over 65s) in this important conference. If you are interested in attending and/or making a presentation, please contact us. Importantly, if you, or your organisation, would like to SPONSOR an older person to attend from Western Australia, please contact us to discuss conference Sponsorship Packages.

<http://www.valscafe.org.au/index.php/news/item/123-2015-national-lgbti-ageing-aged-care-conference-registrations-presentation-submissions-sponsorship-details>



Marriage Equality: The Effects Of Confetti In The Classroom

“The tipping point is behind us, so there is now a different energy”. These were the words of a woman of faith in our conversation last week as we discussed LGBTI inclusion. A few days later, an estimated 5000 people gathered, in the rain, in Perth’s Russell Square to rally for marriage equality. The voices of the remnant opposition sound increasingly hollow as last straws are grasped: notional fears of displeasing our Asian neighbours seem as implausible as divine thunderbolts. Soon the concept of heterosexual-exclusive marriage will seem a dissonant memory, as social amnesia sets in with predictable rapidity.

GRAI Matters usually leaves equal marriage to be debated elsewhere, but it is fascinating to notice the impact of this movement rippling into the aged care space. It is curious too, that in its blend of conservatism and radicalism, the marriage debate unites people across the political spectrum and also generates introspection within religious organisations.

The ‘Ireland effect’, with its respectful style and support from prominent church figures, set a jubilant tone and was rapidly followed by the hotly contested American High court decision overturning state bans on marriage as unconstitutional.

But the story that resonates for me as a great metaphor in an aged care environment, is news that Pitcairn Island, with a mere 48 inhabitants in the Outer Hebrides, has also just changed its laws to embrace equal marriage – despite not claiming any LGBTI inhabitants. Partly this was a “why not?” response – as it now seems the normal thing to do – but also this statement of inclusion changes everyone else in a subtle but positive way, even if there is never a gay or lesbian wedding on the island.

We sometimes experience an undercurrent of ambivalence within the aged care sector: “Why should we bother with LGBTI inclusivity if we don’t have any of those people here?” Of course we reply, you may well have, and don’t know it, or may have tomorrow, if you are open enough to notice. But even if your organisation never did have an LGBTI client to care for, you would, like the Pitcairn Islanders, reap the benefits of being proactively inclusive: in becoming self aware of the corrosive effects of exclusion and in taking pride in making a stand for inclusive human rights, we raise the standards of our humanity – surely something to cheer for.

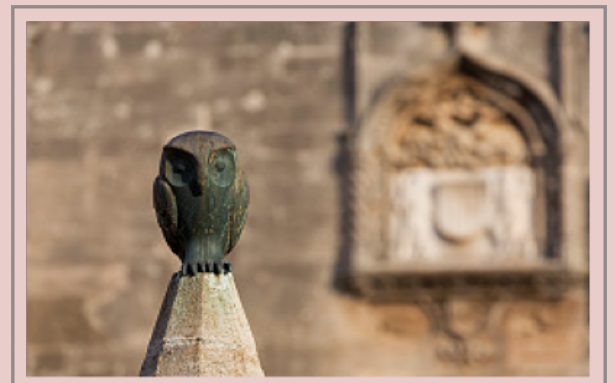
June Lowe

SURVEY: The Getting of Wisdom

Pots of gold at the end of the rainbow, the brass ring on the merry-go-round, the getting of wisdom... all of these things are considered elusive, difficult to grasp, well nigh impossible! However, history and research tells us that the getting of wisdom is actually attainable, not necessarily all of the time by all of the people, but there are those among us who have been known to be wise. PhD candidate, Leander Mitchell (University of Queensland), is therefore seeking your assistance. She and her supervisor, Professor Nancy Pachana, are looking to learn more about wisdom, in particular, the measurement of wisdom.

If you are aged 50 years and over and interested in helping to discover more about the elusive concept of wisdom and how it might be best measured, please contact Leander Mitchell for more information.

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Love in Later Life

Marriage equality in the UK has proved popular across all age groups. A total of 1,409 marriages were formed between same-sex couples between 29 March and 30 June 2014. Of these, 32 were between people aged over 65. And, from 2008 to 2012, there were 1,997 civil partnerships among the over-65s.

Nigel Hurley and Roger Newman met on a chatline, and despite coming from different circumstances are now a great advert for marriage in later life.

Newman 73, had been living alone for five years after his partner, Michael, died of an asbestos-related cancer in 2004.

“I never thought I’d meet someone,” he says. “I thought that after Michael died, that would be it and I’d be like so many other gay men that I knew who were widowed; I thought I’d just go on and on and on alone.”

Hurley 60, was going through a divorce and had started seeing men for the first time in his life. He says: “Seeing guys was always there in my head but I’d never acted on it because I was married. Then I met Roger and that was it. We clicked.”

Hurley proposed on New Year’s Eve in Gran Canaria where the couple spend Christmas each year. They had watched the fireworks on a rooftop and then gone to sit in a quiet bar.

“It was pretty unromantic really,” says Newman. “There was no one on one knee or anything like that,” chips in Hurley. “It was just, you know, what do you think?”



Roger Newman, 73, met Nigel Hurley, 60, on a chatline and had a civil partnership in March

Roger and Nigel’s path, has not been entirely smooth. Some of Hurley’s friends and family were shocked at his new relationship. He had been an evangelical church minister and since he left, people he thought were friends have not been in touch. “They don’t agree with divorce,” he says, “and then the gay thing – I’m virtually growing horns out the top of my head, in their eyes.”

Newman adds: “No one comes to situations like this without a certain amount of struggle. What we’ve been through is a part of how things are and how they will be.”

Newman says: “As human beings, we’re not meant to be alone. However much of a challenge it is to be with another person, our lives are richer because of it.”

He adds: “It’s worth it because you get a tremendous amount out of being with someone ... As gay people, we are much more likely to be living alone than heterosexual people. It’s a big issue. I’m really grateful that I’ve got somebody. But we’ve had to work at it.”

Adapted from: <http://gu.com/p/45kfq/stw#img-2>

GRAI



GLBTI Rights in Ageing Inc.

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

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GRAI was established in 2005 in response to fears within the LGBTI community that, as they grew older, they would have to 'return to the closet' if they required services from mainstream care providers.

GRAI works to improve the quality of life for older LGBTI people, focusing on both social inclusion within the community, and also the provision of care services. We aim to create a safe and inclusive mature-age environment for all people of diverse sexualities and gender identities.

GRAI works with government agencies, with the aged care sector and in the community to provide visibility and a voice for LGBTI elders.

- Through research and advocacy we have already achieved law reform to outlaw discrimination of older LGBTI people.
- We deliver training to the aged care sector to achieve responsive and welcoming aged care services.
- We hold community events to build better community supports and friendships within the LGBTI community.

We network nationally and internationally with groups and individuals interested in issues of LGBTI ageing, and welcome collaborative partnerships and new members.