



## Action Group meeting

The Action Group held its first meeting for the year and came up with fresh ideas on how to support all the young LGBTIQ people in our schools. We plan to have meetings every 6 weeks during 2016. Newcomers are always welcome, please send an email to the address at the end of this newsletter for more information about meetings.

Our aim is for all Queensland schools to be safe learning environments for young people of diverse sexuality, gender or bodies.

We have welcomed several newcomers to our recent meetings, Gillian and Jo from Headspace, Margaret from P&Cs Qld, Mandy a school based nurse and Aaron an enthusiastic parent.

At our last meeting during 2015, young people came and talked to us about the impact they have had in their schools. Hannah and Paris showed us the presentation they made to their school management. Jodey told us about the survey he and his friend Sarah conducted, involving 244 students in Ipswich schools and titled 'LGBTIQ+ Sexual Education and Support in Schools'. We congratulate these young people on their amazing work.

## The Department of Education

The Action Group continues to ask the Department of Education to provide comprehensive information on their website about supporting LGBTIQ students while they are at school. Another letter has recently been sent to the Minister for Education, the Honourable Kate Jones.

Research has shown that Government policy is essential. It allows the principals and teachers to know they are doing the right thing in their support for LGBTIQ students and their parents.

Government policy must be public and visible so that parents know what to expect from a good supportive school.

Any parent whose child is being bullied or discriminated against and is struggling to get the support they need from their school should, in the first place, speak with their school principal. If that does not achieve change for the better, they should contact [the regional departmental office](#).

## “Bullying. No Way!” website

The national 'Bullying No Way' website now has information about homophobic and transphobic bullying and provides some video and teaching resources for schools to access. However, the lack of either a search function or a link from the "Resources for the classroom" page, means that this information is difficult to find, so we have provided this [link](#) to help you find it.

## Safe Schools Coalition Queensland

Contributed by Bonney Corbin from true Relationships and Reproductive Health. Bonney coordinates the Safe Schools Coalition in Queensland. [bonney.corbin@true.org.au](mailto:bonney.corbin@true.org.au)

'All of Us' was launched as a curriculum resource on 26 November 2015, approved by the Department for Education and Training with clear links to the year 7 and 8 curriculum. It is available to download online at <http://www.safeschoolscoalition.org.au/all-of-us>. There is also a new document available online 'Guide to supporting a Student to Affirm or Transition Gender Identity at School' at <http://www.safeschoolscoalition.org.au/guide-to-supporting-a-student-to-affirm-or-transition-gender-identity-at-school-1>.

We are planning a full day forum in Brisbane on 18 February 2016 for teachers called 'Respectful Relationships

Education as Violence Prevention'. On the day we will offer a number of Safe Schools Sessions within one of the professional development streams. People can register their interest to attend here: <http://www.true.org.au/Events---education/Education---Community-Services/respectful-relationships-education-as-violence-prevention>

We are calling for supporter organisations to be listed on the website: <http://www.safeschoolscoalition.org.au/our-supporters/organisations> Thank you to PLFAG, Relationships Australia, the Queensland Teachers Union, P&Cs Qld, Mental Illness Fellowship Queensland, Wesley Mission Brisbane, Australian Transgender Support Association QLD, Brisbane LGBTIQ Action Group, the Queensland Aids Council, Young People Ahead Youth and Community Services Inc., and the LGBTI legal service for formalising their support and working alongside us in Queensland.

Thank you all for your support in rolling out Safe Schools Coalition Queensland! We look forward to working with you throughout 2016.

## Young LGBTIQ+ and Mental Health

Contributed by Gillian Marshall-Pierce, headspace Ipswich.



headspace is a National Youth Mental Health Foundation delivering free services for young people aged 12-25 in regards to General Health; Mental Health, Drug and Alcohol support and Employment and Training. headspace is committed to providing LGBTIQ+ friendly service and space for young people. Across QLD, headspace centres can average towards 20% of young people accessing the centre identifying as LGBTIQ+. A representative on behalf of Aftercare headspace centres in QLD (Ipswich, Wooloongabba, Nundah and Meadowbrook) has recently joined the Queensland Action Group for LGBTIQ+ Students and is committed to promoting and supporting the campaign.

There is no doubt that some LGBTIQ+ young people can have a particularly challenging time at school which can affect their general wellbeing and mental health.

Some common experiences that can affect the wellbeing of a young person can include:

- Feeling “different” from other people around them.
- Homophobic bullying, whether verbal or physical.
- Feeling pressure to deny or change their sexuality.
- Feeling worried about “coming out” to friends, family, fellow students or workers, along with the possibility of being rejected or isolated.
- Feeling unsupported or misunderstood by friends, family, fellow students or workers.

These pressures can be very stressful, especially when combined with all the other issues associated with growing up, such as managing school or university, finding a job, forming relationships and making sense of their identity and place in the world. Things to look out for in the young person include:

- Changes in mood – feeling sadder, more anxious, or more irritable than usual.
- Changes in behaviour – being less talkative, becoming withdrawn or being more aggressive.
- Changes in relationships – falling out with friends or their partner, or conflict with family.
- Changes in appetite – eating more or less than usual, or losing or gaining weight rapidly.

- Changes in sleep patterns – not sleeping enough, or sleeping too much.
- Changes in coping – feeling overwhelmed or tired of life.
- Changes in thinking – more negative thoughts or thoughts of self harm or suicide.

**LGBTIQ+** young people who come from families that fully support their sexuality have better overall health, mental health, higher self-esteem, and are more likely to believe they will have a good life as an adult. Family members can support a young person with a diverse sexuality by:

- Talking in an open, non-judgemental way about their sexuality.
- Expressing acceptance and provide support.
- Requiring that family members and other people respect their sexuality.
- Welcoming their friends or partner to family events.
- Believing they can have a full, happy future as an adult.

Remember that small changes in your level of acceptance and support can make a difference in reducing their risk of suicide and improve general and mental health outcomes. If young people are going through a tough time, encourage them to get further advice and support at [headspace](#).

## What YOU can do in YOUR school

There are things you can do in your school that could make a huge difference for the LGBTIQ students:

- Talk to the school principal about joining [Safe Schools Coalition Queensland](#)
- Form an ally group where LGBTIQ students can feel safe and can be supported by straight school friends. Check out this helpful guide: ['What Makes an Ally'](#)
- Write an article for the school newsletter that tells your story.
- Talk to other people in the school - staff or parents, school nurse, guidance officer, school chaplain. You may be surprised how much support there is for LGBTIQ young people.

## Resources

- The Australian Human Rights Commission have recently published a new report [Resilient Individuals: Sexual Orientation Gender Identity & Intersex Rights 2015](#) The report details the range of considerable challenges that LGBTI people in Australia continue to face.
- [A Canadian report](#) has been published into LGBTIQ students and schools. The conclusion and recommendations make good reading and provide lots of ideas.
- [All of Us](#) teaching resources that support gender diversity, sexual diversity and intersex topics.
- A [guide to supporting a student to affirm or transition gender identity at school](#).
- UNESCO has released the first regional review of LGBTI bullying in Asia Pacific schools titled 'From Insult to Inclusion'. You can access the report through their press release on [this site](#).

## Upcoming meetings:

You are all very welcome to attend meetings of the action group. For those unable to attend in person teleconferencing is available, please contact Janet Berry (details below) for more information.

Meetings are usually held every 6 weeks in Milton, Brisbane. The **next meeting is scheduled for Monday 21 March**. At this meeting we will be setting the dates for the rest of the year and these will be notified in our next Newsletter.

Please share this newsletter with your family, friends and work colleagues.

If you would like to be added to the mailing list please contact:

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