



Action Group

The Action Group has had meetings with several other organisations in recent weeks. We wanted to make them aware of the difficulties faced by LGBTIQ young people and to seek their support for the advocacy work we do. We received overwhelming support and encouragement from all the people we met with:

- Queensland Department of Communities
- Queensland Family and Child Commission
- Anti-Discrimination Commission Queensland
- Queensland Registrar General

Meeting with the Education Department

The Action Group has another appointment with officials from Queensland Department of Education in October. We will continue our discussions from the last meeting:

- A year ago we were told that a more comprehensive policy on supporting LGBTIQ children in schools was being prepared for publication on their website. However, the short document titled [“Diversity in Queensland schools – Information for Principals”](#) remains the only visible evidence that the Queensland Department of Education cares for LGBTIQ children and young people.
- The role of the department’s eight [inclusion coaches](#) is to provide leadership and direction to strengthen the capacity of Queensland state schools by providing a key point of contact for support and advice to principals, school leaders and regional staff about evidence-based inclusive practices focussed on improving the educational outcomes of all students. To date these inclusion coaches have not been trained in the inclusion of LGBTIQ children and young people although we have been told they will receive Safe Schools Coalition training.
- We are asking the human resources department of the Education Department to have an inclusive policy that supports all their employees who are LGBTI. This would set a great example to all schools and staff across the state.

School Formals - it’s that time of year

The school formal can be an anxious event for many teenagers, but for young people who identify as something other than heterosexual, it's especially difficult. Rarely can they take the partner they'd like to and in many cases they don't feel welcome or are asked not to attend.

Tips for school principals:

- Make sure dress codes are not overly restrictive.
- Make it known that same-sex partners and friends are welcome as dates.
- Make sure everyone in the school knows diversity is accepted.

Gender identity discrimination and birth certificates:

[The First Australian National Trans Mental Health Study](#), funded by BeyondBlue, has identified factors responsible for depression and suicide in transgender people, including failure to recognise their identity. The primary identification document is your birth certificate.

The Action Group has asked the Queensland Attorney General, the Honourable Yvette d'Ath to remove the legal barriers faced by transgender and intersex people who want to change their birth certificates.

The Action Group is particularly keen that young people should be able to change the sex and/or gender recorded on their birth certificate. The number of transgender children who are socially transitioning is increasing every year and their core documents need to reflect their true gender to avoid damaging discrimination.

Safe Schools Coalition Queensland

Have a look at the huge list of organisations that are [supporters](#) of Safe Schools Coalition Australia. It is impressive!

In Queensland, Safe Schools Coalition is being delivered by True and they have provided an up to date report:

"Safe Schools Coalition Queensland continues to work in Queensland Schools and over the next few months most of our work will be undertaken in central and north Queensland. We have had requests from a number of people interested in undertaking research into LGBTI inclusivity and safety in school communities. Researchers are welcome to contact our staff at True on 3250 0240. "

[Introductory training for all staff in schools](#) across Queensland is now available free online. It is available for professional staff in schools, including primary and secondary teachers, special education teachers, school leaders, support staff, corporate staff and administrators.

Health support for transgender children:

The Action Group is writing to the Minister for Health about the unbelievably long waiting time for children and adolescents who are gender dysphoric or gender fluid to get an appointment at the Children's Gender Clinic.

They now have to wait almost two years to see the experienced paediatric psychiatrist and endocrinologist. Two years until they are able to receive a diagnosis and a treatment plan. Two years in which young bodies are changing very quickly and causing extreme distress. Young people experiencing Gender Dysphoria who are commencing puberty need help immediately so that they can be assisted, assessed and where needed, given access to puberty blocking medication. Some unwanted changes to a young person's body are irreversible or others may require later surgery that could be avoided had the young people who needed them been given access to puberty blockers, which allow them more time to think through their options (as the blockers are temporary and reversible). Two years is also a very long time for parents to remain unsure, distressed and sometimes feel they have caused the "problem". Early and prompt diagnosis is necessary to avoid mental health problems and suicidal intentions.

Dr Stephen Stathis, the Director of the Children's Gender Clinic at Lady Cilento Hospital talks about his work [here](#).

Transgender young people live in all parts of Queensland and help must be available for them wherever they and their families are.

LGBTIQ research in Queensland Universities

There is research being conducted in Queensland universities that supports the LGBTI community, but little awareness and certainly no networking to bring this work together in a way that informs and drives progress in the community.

The Action Group has an enthusiastic university researcher among its members and she is working on developing links between university researchers and the Department of Education to enhance research that supports LGBTIQ students and families in Queensland.

Transgender children and sport

Permitting transgender children and youth to participate in recreational sports in their affirmed gender can provide an enormous boost to their self-confidence and self-esteem and provide them with positive experiences that will help them in all other areas of their lives. Because transgender young people often must overcome significant stigma and challenges, it would be particularly harmful to exclude them from the significant physical, mental and social benefits that young people gain by playing recreational sports.

The Action Group are working to ensure discrimination against transgender children in the area of sport does not occur in Queensland.

Additional information

Australian Capital Territory Human Rights Commission have published a brochure on [gender identity discrimination](#).

The [Queensland Police Service LGBTI liaison officers](#) can provide support and assistance to LGBTIQ community members when dealing with police matters. They also have a good awareness of LGBTIQ support services in their local community.

[Gender Help for Parents Australia](#) is a website created by Australian parents who have struggled to find information about services and support for issues around their children's gender identity.

Please share this newsletter with your family, friends and work colleagues. If you would like to be added to the mailing list please contact:

Janet Berry
Chairperson, Queensland Action Group for LGBTIQ+ Students

Email: janet_berry@bigpond.com
Phone: 0428 536 618
Website: www.qldactiongrouplgbtiqstudents.org