



GLBTI Retirement
Association Incorporated

2068

GRAI News - November/December 2005

Dear GRAI supporters

Welcome to the November/December edition of the news update for GRAI. The GRAI website is closer to being launched with some final touches being made and some interesting content uploaded. It is our aim to have the site up and running for distribution of GRAI news and accessing GLBTI Ageing material and resources early in 2006.

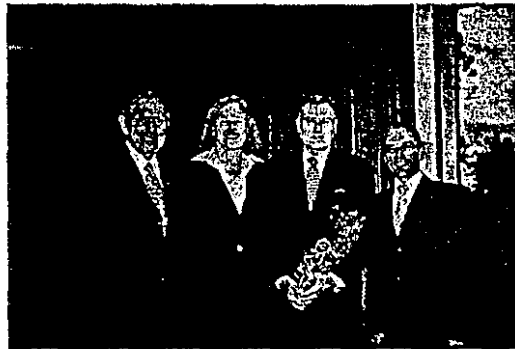
GRAI Community Forum - Tuesday 25 October 2005

The Inaugural GRAI Community Forum was held in Tuesday 25 October in the splendid surroundings of the University Club at UWA. Our sincere thanks must go to Pride WA, the UWA Institute of Advanced Studies and the UWA Equity and Diversity Office for their generous support and sponsorship of this event. Without this support we would not have been able to host such a successful evening or be able to present the interesting range of speakers who presented on GLBTI issues.

It was extremely gratifying to see just over 100 people at the event and hear the Hon. Justice Kirby AC deliver a passionate address on a range of issues of concern for the GLBTI community - including a heart-felt perspective on his enduring and loving relationship with his partner of more than 30 years, Johan van Vloten.

Although His Honour admitted to not being as familiar as he perhaps should be regarding the range of issues about GLBTI Retirement per se, he assured the audience that Johan had recently reminded him that as he was approaching retirement age, it was probably timely for him to at least consider this rather pressing and important issue!

Speaking on the future of GLBTI recognition in the wider community, Justice Kirby left the audience with a comment that deserves to be recorded as one of his most passionate and memorable quotes. "The future belongs to truth, science and rationality rather than to dogma, hatred, and ignorance."



pictured l - r: Justice Michael Kirby, Samantha Dowling (GRAI Deputy Chair), Johan van Vloten (Justice Kirby's partner) and Graham Lovelock (GRAI Chair)



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The key-note speaker at the forum, Dr Mark Hughes from UNSW, presented some interesting material from his recent narrative research project in the Blue Mountains - *Sexual Identity in Health and Aged Care*.

The focus of this research project was on gays and lesbians approaching older age and their experiences of and expectations for health and aged care. The main aim of Mark's research was to facilitate narratives relating to sexual identity and how this identity should or should not be acknowledged in contact with health and aged care providers. Fourteen people were interviewed either together or separately.

The last speaker on the evening, the Hon. Brian Greig spoke from his perspective as a former Senator about some of the many legislative changes that are still required at a Commonwealth government level in order to truly embrace the concept of equal rights for GLBTI people within the wider community.

All in all, the forum was an outstanding success and the GRAI Board is keen to see this event become an annual fixture on the Pride month calendar.

Board News

The latest meeting of the GRAI Board was held on Tuesday 15 November at CityWest Lotteries House in West Perth. This meeting was an opportunity to de-brief after the Community Forum and discuss some of the feedback we received following the event.

On the whole, the comments we received were overwhelmingly supportive of the group's efforts to bring the first public forum on GLBTI Ageing issues to fruition. We did receive some constructive suggestions that will be considered for future events and we look forward to making the 2006 GRAI Community Forum a more interactive event.

At this month's meeting, the Board also considered options for holding a Strategic Planning session early in the New Year. This process will enable us to plot a direction, set some priorities and develop a plan of action for GRAI in order to identify and achieve a range of activities of importance in GLBTI Ageing over the next three to five years.

We have made great progress in the last six months to get GRAI to the point it's at today - something that's been achieved by a lot of hard work and the words of encouragement and support of many people. As I said in my speech at the Community Forum, getting any new community based organisation up and running always presents challenges. It is only with the support of the community that organisations like GRAI will continue to exist and be able to work on behalf of the membership as well as serve a wider community interest.

It is worth noting that research into the experiences and needs of older gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex people in Australia is still in its very early stages of development.

There is little doubt that the baby boomer cohort is approaching ageing unlike any other group of older people in history. Service providers, government and agencies are increasingly aware of this with many of them now starting to look at giving a more balanced approach and increasing choices to the needs of future customers from the baby boomer market.



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Despite this however, the needs and desires of older GLBTI people continue to remain somewhat invisible.

It is worth noting that GLBTI baby boomers are most likely to be the first generation to be openly 'out' as they age. This very fact means that service providers, agencies and government will need to approach older GLBTI people very differently to any other group of retirees in the years to come.

I believe this is where organisations like GRAI have a vital role to play in working with a range of stakeholders to appropriately address the gaps that exist in this area.

In the short-term, I believe organisations such as GRAI will play an important role in developing a range of options for older GLBTI people to consider when accessing retirement, health and aged care services. We can be making contact with and work with existing providers, agencies and government to address the many gaps that exist and say:

"If you want to engage with GLBTI people as potential consumers, this is what you need to do and these are the issues you need to be aware of."

Special General Meeting - Under clause 9.6 of the Rules of Association of GRAI, the Board is required to call a Special General Meeting (SGM) of the membership within six (6) months of a casual appointment to the Board. As Andrew Baker was seconded to the position of Treasurer recently, we will be calling a SGM in March in order to comply with the constitutional requirements of GRAI. A notice of the SGM will be sent to members early in the New Year with appropriate details.

Future Board meetings

At our November meeting, the Board resolved not to hold a meeting in December as the scheduled meeting for that month will fall in the week prior to Christmas. With the usual round of festive season engagements we all have booked it was thought best to hold our next meeting in January. Meetings in 2006 will be held as usual on the third Tuesday of the month at CityWest Lotteries House commencing at 7.30pm. All members are reminded they are welcome to attend Board meetings.

Better Practice presentation - 10 November 2005

As I reported in previous Updates, I was invited as Chair of GRAI to address delegates at the *Aged Care Standards and Accreditation Agency* 'WA Better Practice Seminar' about the formation of GRAI and our plans for the future in a concurrent workshop session entitled "Ethics in Aged Care" held on 10 November at the Duxton Hotel.

Some 200 delegates registered for the two days of this conference and more than 80 people attend the concurrent session in which I presented. I received numerous comments of support for GRAI and the work we're undertaking following my presentation. The national conference coordinators also expressed interest in having speakers in other states attend Better Practice conferences in 2006 and I was able to pass on details of people in the east for them to liaise with.



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Membership news

Our membership numbers continue to increase - especially since the Community Forum - although we are still a little short of the 100 members I was hoping to achieve by the end of 2005.

If you know of anyone who you think would be interested in joining GRAI or speaking to either myself or any of our other Board members, please ask them to contact info@grai.org.au and we will be able to send them a membership application to complete.

Membership fees are as follows:

Individual (waged)	\$ 25.00
Individual (unwaged)	\$ 15.00
Partner	\$ 40.00
Corporate (non-profit)	\$ 50.00
Corporate (profit)	\$ 250.00

Finally - a word of thanks

I believe 2005 will be seen in years to come as the year in which real progress was made in addressing issues of ageing for GLBTI people in Western Australia. As I have said before, progress such as this takes the collective input of many people.

Although at times it may seem as though there's only one or two individuals driving issues forward, in reality there's always a loyal and dedicated group of people working alongside those who appear to be the public face of organisations supporting them to achieve goals.

I want to make special mention of my fellow Inaugural GRAI Board members - Sam Dowling, Graham Douglas-Meyer, Andrew Baker, Steve Singer, Damian Douglas-Meyer, Malcolm Fialho, Noel Hyland and Michelle Hunter. Each of these people has made a magnificent contribution to furthering issues of real importance for older people of diverse sexuality and gender identities. My sincere thanks and appreciation goes to each of them!

I would also like to thank each of the people who attended the discussion groups we held earlier this year as well as everyone who has joined GRAI as a member in 2005.

There are too many people to thank individually but please know that your efforts and interest have amounted to something tangible and will, I'm sure, see GRAI further develop as a strong advocate for older GLBTI people in the years to come.

In closing, I would like to wish all members and supporters of GRAI a happy and safe festive season and look forward to more contact with each of you throughout 2006.

Graham
Graham Lovelock
Chair - GRAI