

BEYOND 'THAT'S SO GAY'

A National Challenging Homophobia Tour

LGBT Postcards from the Edge



TOUR WEEK THIRTEEN, (DARWIN):
SUPPORTING OUR RIGHT TO SUFFER:
SWEATING IN THE SHADE

"I don't suffer from it but I support it..."

Another year, another university campus stall to promote May 17th: the International Day Against Homophobia (IDAHO). From all accounts this Charles Darwin University student approached workers from the Northern Territory Aids and Hepatitis Council (NTAHC) and appeared to be quite pleased with himself that he was so, in his mind anyway, progressive, enlightened and "OK" with this form of suffering.

Once they had finished their interactions with university students and staff, the NTAHC workers would head to Darwin's Civic Centre where they were hosting a seminar featuring myself and Jen Sainsbury from the Foundation for Young Australians.

Jen has recently returned from overseas where she completed a two-month investigation as part of a Churchill Fellowship she received. Her findings are focusing on the opportunities for Australian lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) progress in youth advocacy, social marketing and support infrastructure. These and other matters, including her own untapped potential and my reflections of completing one-third of my 38-week national challenging homophobia tour, were on the agenda later that week when Jen took me to dinner (for those of you who know Darwin, Jen took me to Darwin's Ski Club where we watched the sunset).



At the IDAHO seminar I would talk about my tour and introduce The Discount Model (introduced in my Albany blog), the foundation that I have built my book, Beyond 'That's So Gay' around. It says that people will only take action when they have moved through some key stages:

1. Existence (it actually exists here);
2. Significance (it's not just about one or two locals who move to the big smoke);
3. Solvability (it's possible for us to do something to support people ourselves);
4. Self (it's something that is relevant and achievable for me personally);
5. Action (I have no excuses, I have to do something).

When I asked the gathered teachers, health professionals and LGBT locals where they thought most regional and rural schools and organisations were according to The Discount Model, the responses ranged between 1 and 4. The answer? 2. Significance. This is something I will return to more and more as the weeks go on. Interestingly this heartened and encouraged some, whilst it mortified others.

A series of questions were asked of Jen and myself, with three sticking out in my mind for various reasons. The first related to pre-teacher training, given that LGBT content is literally, or virtually, non-existent in teaching degrees. In context this is an essential part of changing the Australian educational landscape. In isolation it sets up often young and new teachers who could front up unsupported to new schools that are invariably ignorant, intolerant and/or hostile environments, homophobically speaking. As cause for hope I noted the National Youth Roundtable inspired project of Sydney's James Orchiston, who cleverly engaged most State and Territory Youth and Education Ministers in the lead-up to tertiary education reform.



The second question I'll share related to aspirational goals of LGBT education. An audience member bemoaned, "why can't we just talk about where we want to go, rather than talking about where we are?" I wondered where he'd been for the last hour of presentations. Noting that there had been a trend in the violence against women field to focus on respectful relationships rather than family violence, which I think is premature and wishful in thinking, I shared what I had observed for over a decade in my work with young people and adults alike: we need to deal with challenging homophobia before we can fully affirm sexual diversity. This does not mean that they are separate. Indeed, the basis of my work in school classrooms for so many years, the Pride & Prejudice educational package, is to do them both within a 6-week program, challenging homophobia first, affirming sexual diversity thereafter. That the program, through formal evaluation, demonstrates changes in students' homophobic attitudes and behaviour, is a testament to this approach.

Finally, the third question related to an audience member's experience of Thailand. This man noted that Thai language did not have a word for gay and that they were open and did not have any problems with homophobia there. Drawing a breath and biting my tongue I shared that I had worked in Thailand as part of my international LGBT education efforts in recent years, and that any observations that Thailand did not have any issues with homophobia were highly romanticised. That Asian cultures tend to, as do Latin American cultures, live their non-heterosexual lives through gender and sexual identity, that the south-east Asian cultures have a cultural tendency towards "saving face" (i.e. doing whatever it takes to not cause discomfort or embarrassment) and that Western experiences of Thailand through it's tourist industry should not be construed as their being no homophobia in Thailand.



After the seminar I was approached by two school staff, a teacher and a counselor, and asked, “Are you doing school visits?” I replied that I certainly was and was quickly invited to a meeting of teachers and welfare staff at Sanderson Middle School. I realised quickly that this was a win given that every time I mentioned it I was told that the school was as rough as guts.

Unfortunately I could not meet all requests to visit schools. When news of the seminar spread through Arnhem Land, NTAHC staff received requests for me to travel to Nhulunbuy, a remote community on the Gove Peninsula. Not having the time to drive almost two days along dirt roads or the significant amount of money to fly there, I had to decline the request. Yet it’s food for thought for anyone thinking there are not challenging homophobia opportunities in remote Indigenous communities.

Arriving early for the meeting at Sanderson Middle School, I was shown around the school by the student counselor, “Rita”. Once in the staffroom, Rita apologised when she could not immediately find a cup for my customary “cuppa” and wondered if the one on the sink was OK. I laughed and said I’d been in plenty of staffrooms and realised that taking the wrong cup could result in me losing my arm. Rita laughed too and relaxed knowing I was not about to judge her school based on cup availability (which rivals the lack of teaspoons in any communal kitchen or lack of pens and post-it notes in any office).



As I contemplated taking my first sip I was introduced to the head of Physical Education (PE), who shook my hand and apologised for being unable to attend the meeting. He then immediately tried to



run away, yet had to stop when I asked what would be the things he would want to know if he could have attended the meeting. His response was immediate.

“What to do...Strategies about what to say when the kids say [that’s so gay]...”

Out of the corner of my eye I saw a gathering of teachers, mostly male, watching my every move. Accustomed to

As he walked away over his shoulder I noticed in the centre of the staffroom noticeboard a recent poster from the Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG), titled ‘So Gay, So Yesterday’. Underneath was written “Do you want to know how to respond to this and other homophobia? Come to the meeting room [date, time]”.

Rita explained that she had gone to the IDAHO seminar thinking that challenging homophobia might be something the school could do more of. She said she left that seminar convinced that it needed to be “a core part of what we do...it’s essential...”

As we walked to the meeting room, Rita reluctantly showed me something; I suspect half expecting that I would not be impressed. On the contrary I was impressed and highly amused.

During the IDAHO seminar I shared the common strategies that teachers and others use to challenge and interrupt homophobic language and behaviour. I go into these in some detail in *Beyond ‘That’s So Gay’: Challenging homophobia in Australian schools*. What I share aims to ease the concerns of teachers who feel they have to come up with the perfect, one-size-fits-all response to students. Instead I demonstrate seven options that a teacher could use, depending on their teaching style, rapport with the students, subject and a range of other factors. The one that often draws the biggest response is the humorous approach example I give.

“Gee, you said your ruler was gay...I wonder if there are any other gay rulers in the room?...Research tells us that gay rulers are at risk of feeling isolated...Perhaps we could form a support group for gay rulers here with yours...But we don’t want the straight rulers to feel left out, so can we have a group over here for...”

What Rita had shown me was something that her colleague, who attended the IDAHO seminar, had left in her pigeonhole: a ruler with a bright orange paper star attached. The note read: “This is your gay ruler. Please look after it so that it doesn’t feel isolated.” The ruler lay on top of a copy of my book.

I laughed.

Rita gave me some context to the school.



“We have a lot of bullying...I feel there is a lot of racism...There’s actually a lot of conflict between the Aboriginal and African communities...So there’s a fair few punch-ons...”

It seems there might be gender differences too.

*“For young women it’s an envy...The Aboriginal girls think the Africans are very beautiful, overtly expressive and great dancers...For young men it’s easy...They say, ‘They call me a c*nt, I call them a c*nt, we fight and it’s over’...”*

Indeed anecdotes abound through Darwin of these conflicts between males. A housemate of “Shane” (re-introduced last blog), “Summer” would explain how she challenged a young Aboriginal boy who called an African boy a “black c*nt”. Growing up as a Turkish girl in the suburbs of Sydney, it was an example of racism that she could not understand, given the kind of racism she has seen against Aboriginal people.

Rita believes a lack of understanding contributes.

“With the Aboriginal kids they don’t always understand what it means to be a refugee...”

On the other hand, some African students claim teacher bias.

“They say, ‘But if I was Aboriginal I wouldn’t get teased and my teachers would listen to me...”

Homophobia too is part of the broader school culture too.

“Some of the biggest impacts for our staff is around homophobia, for example, ‘You’re a fucking lesbian’...”

School leadership changes might mean that the school is more ready than before to challenge homophobia.

“At the moment we have a good leader, but I think staff really need to be supported...In the past, some of the things were swept under the carpet...”

Once seated with those teachers who had come during their recess break, I asked what they wanted most from their time. This included:

- New ideas for strategies to challenge homophobia;
- Things that work;
- To get updated on what is “politically correct”.

The teacher wanting the PC update had just walked in from a class – IT and computing – where two male students had been talking



about gay sex. “Jenny” was still processing what had happened only minutes before.

“It’s hard to know what to do...It’s the middle of a class...I’m still confused in my own mind...”

In addition to debriefing Jenny, I also went through strategies and things that “work”.

Part way through the meeting Rita got up to collect something from the staffroom and noticed a group of teachers, I suspect the same ones I mentioned earlier, standing looking a little sheepish. Asking why they were all being so coy and not joining the meeting, they told Rita that “it would be rude to walk in now...”

“They are grown men Daniel!...”

Once all the teachers reluctantly departed due to class commitments, Jenny asked if she could stay behind. She had got someone to cover her class and it became clear that something was on her mind.

It was then that she told the story of her son, “Sam”. Sam, at 13, had been involved in a physical altercation and had been blasted by the principal for what he’d said (e.g. “really disgusting...”). Jenny wanted to know if the school had handled the situation as well as it could have.

Sam had heard a joke about another student, who was quite short in stature, that he thought was funny. Sam’s teammates had said the joke, and the butt of the joke had asked Sam to repeat it.

Sam: “No, I shouldn’t say...”

Butt of joke: “Go on, say it!...”

Not realising this was an inflammatory dare, Sam repeated the joke which said that this boy was so short that he would not need to bend down to perform oral sex (i.e. “a blowjob”).



Said boy then hit Sam. As Sam would tell his mother, “I got hit, I deserved it because I hurt his feelings...”

Debriefing for the second time with Jenny, I was reminded of how much teacher’s and health professional’s private lives blur with their professional roles. Driving through the desert a few days later I again asked myself a question I had asked often since commencing work in LGBT education in the summer of 1996-7: why is this so different, personal and emotional for people?

My mind went back to an International English Teacher’s Conference where I was on a panel where I discussed my challenging homophobia work in regional schools. After that presentation a female teacher would stay back, tell me about decades of extended family denial about her nephew being gay before weeping, at times uncontrollably, in my arms.

Years later I was training some teachers and health professionals as part of my work with Kids Help Line and was approached at lunchtime by a teacher from regional Victoria who had taken interest in my introduction that morning which referred to my challenging homophobia work in schools. “Grant” would corner me beside the sandwiches, assume I was gay and start giving me the third degree.

Grant: “how comfortable are you with people asking you questions?”

Me: “fairly comfy [Grant], why?...”

All manner of questions came my way. Despite the intimate and possibly inappropriate nature of the discussion, I continued to answer very freely, watching something – as yet - unknown wash over the man who stood before me. This included such clangers as:

- *“Have you found faith?” (he had declared he was a Quaker)*
- *“When are the times you feel loved?”*

Seemingly relishing the intimacy he would say:

“You know, you never get to experience intimacy like this between men...I feel like giving you a hug...Can I give you a hug?...”

He proceeded to give me a long, strong hug. We would pull away, he would shake and emote (some sound) and said “oooo, I just feel like hitting or wrestling with you” (at the same time shadow punching me).

“Well Grant, that’s how heterosexual men typically respond to affection with another male, isn’t it?...”

He then asked if he could give me another bear hug, jiggling and shaking his body disturbingly against mine and emote again (a little growl) and then said: “Its inspirational, you have made my day...”



Thank you, I need a long shower.

Driving through the desert I made the same conclusion I had before: if you are going to challenge homophobia, this difficult, personal and emotional “stuff” is going to come with it.

Back at Sanderson Middle School Jenny would leave, saying how much better and clearer she felt in how to respond to her students, but more importantly how she would follow-up constructively and supportively with her son.

I would stay for another hour or so with Rita, who was very interested in both my start in LGBT education (see piloting a challenging homophobia program in an all-boys Catholic school in regional Victoria) and how I could ever contemplate undertaking a national challenging homophobia tour.

This appeared to be a theme of the questions that flowed my way during my stay in Darwin. The short of my answer was that for people who knew nothing of me, my work and my history, this tour was a “wow”. Yet if people knew more of my background, they would see it was a logical, albeit a daring and bold, progression of my challenging homophobia journey. I explained that I could understand if people were amazed at the thought of it, because in 1999 the morning I stood ready to take my first step into a Year 9 class at an all-boys Catholic school I would have hyperventilated at the thought.

I would explain this a day later on a beach in Darwin’s north to a German PhD student investigating programs for young men around masculinity. It seemed a little pre-destined that I would run into “Patrick” during his 3-month visit to Australia. A colleague who said we would have much to talk about had recently introduced “Patrick” to me via social networking site, Facebook. Patrick says several other people had mentioned my name, but I was already touring on the west coast when Patrick arrived on the east coast. Before arriving, Patrick had been to queer bingo in his hometown of Berlin with a former lover of mine who recommended he talk to me on his travels. Now a Facebook friend, I noted with curiosity that Patrick had even spent time in my hometown of Geelong.

Sitting at Darwin’s Mindil Beach Markets with Shane, we did something I love to do: people watching. As I sipped delightedly on a mango lassi, Shane noted a tall young man walk by.

“Look, we are not the only gays in the village!...”

I nodded not thinking more of it. Moments later said young man approached me and asked if I was “Daniel”.

“Yes...”





I laughed, as did Shane, who believes this kind of thing is always happening to me.

In Patrick I found a different level of conversation than I had found for some time, being able to talk less about the details of my tour and more about the “bigger picture” for want of a better term.

I made it clear to Patrick that it was important for people not to go “wow” about my work. If they did, then I had failed in what I had set out to do: make challenging homophobia work seem less scary and very possible. Driving around the country is just a matter of logistics, sharing cuppas and conversations with locals, teachers and health professionals is something very doable and different.

Between Rita, Patrick and others in Darwin I discussed again my reasoning behind labeling my project a “challenging homophobia” tour rather than an “anti-homophobia” tour, using the recent Jason Ackermanis media controversy as an example.

Just about every LGBT commentator has weighed in on this. Without recapping or repeating, what I will say is that I am always pleasantly surprised by the energy, intelligence and creativity from LGBT and allied quarters whenever such a media story surfaces. There is no doubt that many saw roasting Ackermanis as a bloodsport, and with a mouth like his there is always plenty to devour. Yet I felt what we saw was an “anti-homophobia” approach rather than a “challenging homophobia” approach to his comments.

In the late 1990s I had the “pleasure” of working in some of Geelong’s most disadvantaged schools with young men labeled as having “challenging behaviours”. There was plenty of homophobia to go



around and I would argue that the foundations for my later work were set during this time.

If these young men experienced what they felt was unnecessary or illogical discipline for speaking their minds then it either silenced them or escalated the matter. It also had the potential to win them allies in the class for their opinions. It NEVER had the effect of improving their attitudes.

Whether we like it or not, many people I have spoken to in Western Australia and the Northern Territory believe Ackermanis had a point. Unlike LGBT commentators and allies, many folk I have spoken to have focused on the points that make sense to them: they can understand that men in a changeroom situation might feel uncomfortable thinking a gay men was amongst them and that the AFL might not be the most accepting of workplaces. That he said players should stay in the closet and that it would have a negative impact on the club are generally things they disagree with, but for them this is not their focus.

Importantly for us all is that most people have felt Ackermanis got treated harshly, too harshly in fact, for speaking his mind. For them it feeds into a fear that prevents them from challenging and interrupting homophobia, stops them from starting conversations about what relevance sexual diversity has for their everyday lives and silences them from asking straightforward questions. That fear is simple: they are scared of saying the wrong thing and making things worse for LGBT people and/or they are paranoid of being politically incorrect. This climate is not conducive to progress.

If I had my way, I would sit down for a cuppa with Ackermanis for 45-60 minutes to find out where he is coming from and what prompted his comments. As many of us know, you can only work to challenge and change once you know what someone's real position is. Otherwise it's guesswork.

In the last few months of work in regional and rural Australia I have spoken with many people worse than Ackermanis, and seen them move to a place better than Ackermanis. If they can move over a cuppa, so can he.

Finally on this matter, I wonder why this recent energy, intelligence and creativity are not something that we see more often from the LGBT and allied communities. When I see the work we have ahead of us in regional and rural Australia (not to mention metropolitan), I can only dream about the progress that is possible.

In Darwin, progress is needed in its schools. "Edward" describes his experience at a local Catholic high school.



"I had a pretty hard time at high school and faced a bit of discrimination... Some of it for being Indigenous, some of it for being gay, some of it for being overweight... My first day of high school, I came back from recess and someone had taped a sign to my desk which said something like 'something smells, poof, poof'... I didn't even know what that meant, only that it was bad..."

Whilst Edward took some time to come out, it was no journey for him.

"Journey is a funny word to use because it implies I went from somewhere to somewhere, when I was actually there all along..."



It would continue until his final year, when he arrived for the first day of Year 12 to find something in his communal file.

"One of the boys had left something in there, a note with something like 'we're going to get you poofa'... I then realised he must have left it in November for me to get it in February... So that was pretty calculated..."

This had an undoubted impact on his academic performance and school life.

"Most of the time I used to wag a lot... But I passed... The common theme through all of it was that I didn't know what those terms meant, only that they were bad... You become very secretive... I didn't really talk to anyone about anything... We all have the benefit of hindsight... It's not that I wasn't sure, but I wasn't out so to speak in terms of being able to stand up for myself, to the school, to other students..."

Unlike for most students, Edward's Presentation Ball was not a great end to his school career.

*"That was difficult for me to have a date with someone that was female... I remember that all the girls had a photo together and then all the boys had that photo all together and they asked me not to be a part of it... Yep, school was pretty sh*t for me..."*

Not that Edward didn't eventually thrive.



“Once I left school it was very much better...I didn’t have the daily pressure...I spose it wasn’t part of my life anymore and I had good people around me...”

Edward wonders if him taking longer to work out what being gay meant to him.

“I have a very strong internal dialogue...Coming out to myself and making sure that was the right thing for me was important...Most people decided for me before I really knew what that meant...I like to make up my own mind...I think maybe when I talk to other people , they know about themselves sooner and are perhaps able to challenge the system [and others] more...”

A perfect example of this was when I met with “David”. David knew early who he was.

“I’ve always known I wasn’t what the TV was showing me...I knew for certain, I was maybe 10 or 11 when I had my first erection...I was sitting in front of the TV watching weightlifters and something happened...I started to enjoy it a fair bit...”

David seems to have had a very different experience to other gay students in school.



“I guess I was lucky...I was the bully who picked on bullies...It was very hard to be gay at high school...If there was an effeminate boy at school, then I’d be friends with them...Nothing happened with them though...If I got picked on, I fought back, I belittled them...”

There were plenty of stories where he turned the tables.

“I walked on the oval one day and this boy walked over and started pushing me, saying ‘So you’re gay? What, you find me hot?’...I just started humiliating him...I said, ‘Oh please, my grandmother would hit harder than you’...And by the end of it, his group and my group were laughing at him, so he walked off humiliated...”

And then boarding school.



“This Year 11 boy kept saying ‘You’re gay, you faggot’...So one day I picked up the vacuum cleaner and chased after him...He ran off...”

Given that David’s story was so different to most others that I had heard on this tour, I delved deeper and tried to understand why his experience was so wildly different.

“I felt like I was defending gay people, not just defending myself, that’s where I got my power to fight back...I was always alone, I was always pushed aside...It was nothing I was taught...I was always told to be quiet, that I don’t have a choice...Maybe that was it, maybe that’s why...It was rebellion...”

David reflected for the first time on the link to his self-worth at the time.

*“I guess deep down inside as much as I thought I was rubbish and I had nothing to offer the world, I knew I wasn’t a bad person...I knew I was not wrong...I was told all gay people were pedophiles but I knew I wasn’t attracted to children and I didn’t want to hurt anyone, so I thought ‘F*ck you’, I’m not any of those people...I always thought of myself as an unimportant person...I stuck up for gay people, nerds, anyone...When I think about it now, I had no respect for my own life so I would stick up for everyone else...Now you’ve made me think about it...”*

Both David and Edward have different stories of friends betraying their trust after they revealed their sexual identity.

David told another gay student.

“He was the one that went out and told everyone I was gay, to take the attention off himself and put the focus onto me...”

Rather than getting upset, David sympathised.

“I thought, ‘How lonely must you feel inside to do that?’...”

Edward was outed to other students after he told a female friend at school. Only recently this young woman approached him, relatively drunk at a Darwin nightclub.

“She said, ‘[Edward], I have been in counseling since high school because of the mean things I did to people...And most of that was about what I did to you’...”

Stunned, Edward felt it gave him a sense of closure. He had not expected she would have really thought about it much once school was done. Edward on the other hand finished school differently.



“I stepped off the school ground and did the biggest exhale of my life and never looked back...”

Having had a similar experience at high school myself, it made me recall that I was contacted out of the blue by a fellow student from my high school. “Jack” often wrote to me, he says, during bouts of insomnia, and after many long exchanges I finally found out why this associate at high school wanted so much to engage me 15 years after school had ended.

Jack explained that he thought a lot over the years about how he could have done more to support me in high school. His inaction had played on his mind, and although he had never bullied me, he regretted that he had not become more of a friend. Now with two young daughters and a homophobic wife (interestingly from our Year Level at school), he wondered what life might be like if one or both of his daughters came out. We would talk about this and much more over a few beers before his departure for work to the United States.



I suspect that Jack might react to his daughters coming out differently than the family of “Natasha” or “Alex”, a couple I met toward the end of my stay in Darwin. I approached them both for a few reasons. Firstly, I was interested in chatting with a younger lesbian couple. Secondly, I was finding it hard to gather Indigenous lesbian voices. Finally, I’d been out for a drink with them after the IDAHO seminar and thought they were hilarious.

Natasha’s family didn’t react well when she came out as gay.

*“My mother started throwing boxes of my sh*t out the door...”*

Edward had a different experience. Firstly, his mother died the day before his 18th birthday. His father came a few years later.

“I was in my mid-20s when I came out to my dad...We actually had





the conversation around the kitchen table...He said I was his son, he loved me and that it didn't change a thing...He always surprises me like that...Dad grew up in rural New South Wales in the 60s and not with any of that hippy stuff so in some ways he's conservative and in other ways he's not..."

Like Edward, Natasha took time to come out to herself even though Alex thinks she is a born lesbian. Talking about Natasha's application for an LGBT position, this became clearer.

Natasha: "They said, 'Make sure you put it in your cover letter'..."

Alex: "By the way I'm a licker..."

Natasha: "[Alex] thinks I have it stamped on my forehead..."

Alex: [cue playful slap] "I do not..." [laughs]

Natasha and Alex had very different coming out stories. Natasha got her first inkling through sport.

"I always knew I was different...I was heavily involved in rugby...It took me to remove myself from rugby to realise that that was an aspect of myself...That I was gay...I didn't really understand until I got into that rugby environment, surrounded by a lot of openly gay people...I was very confused when I left...I was quite young and I wanted to make sure that I was not being swept up in the environment, the majority on that team...I wanted to go away and make sure that was how I felt, so I had to remove myself..."

For Alex it was different.

*"[My story] is really boring...I just got f*cking drunk...I had a boyfriend for 4 years...I dumped him because he was a d*ck...I got drunk one night, hooked up with this girl and she never left me alone...But I thought, 'How much better is this!?'..."*



Meeting each other happened through work. Natasha was from out of town, in Alex's town and didn't know where she was going to stay.

Natasha: "We met over skewers..."

Both: "Crocodile kebabs..."

Natasha: "She said, 'We're going out for drinks, do you wanna come?'"...

Alex: "She says she doesn't remember, I got up early the next morning..."

Natasha: I was not even awake...So I rang later...Because I didn't want you to feel cheap..."

Alex: "Then we met for breakfast a few days later..."

When I asked what drew them both to Darwin, they took a while to sell the place.

Natasha: "It's too expensive to visit...I find it frustrating that you can't swim anywhere..."

*Alex: "You've met some f*cking nutbag lesbians..."*

Natasha: "Psychos..."

Alex: "But we've met some of the nicest people...You usually find most people up here are running, from whatever's happened in their life... It's very laid back, it's not a race...Don't let anyone tell you Darwin is flat...It isn't...I ride a bike..."

Edward, born and bred in Darwin, had moved back after stints on the East Coast.

"I still find Darwin more accepting...In Darwin you just are...I like the slowness of it...It's just as slow as you make it..."

Not that Darwin doesn't still have it's challenges.

Back at the IDAHO stall at Charles Darwin University, a man approached the stall.

"I want you to know that I'm not gay but my daughter's friend is gay... She's not gay...My daughter that is...It's her friend...She's gay..."

