

BEYOND 'THAT'S SO GAY'

A National Challenging Homophobia Tour

# LGBT Postcards from the Edge



## TOUR WEEK THIRTY-SEVEN, MELBOURNE (SORT OF) SNEAKING BACK IN: SHORT AND SHARP...

Although I hadn't planned it that way, sneaking back into Melbourne the week of the Melbourne Cup was a fortunate time for "re-entry" to the place I had called home for the last 11 years, save a few stints living in Berlin.

This served to shorten my week considerably (for non-Melburnians, this "Race that stops a nation" on a Tuesday means that NOBODY does anything on the Monday).

My first stop on Wednesday was to Victoria's Rainbow Network. As it's website says:

*"Rainbow Network Victoria is for anyone who works with same sex attracted or gender questioning young people in any setting. We provide free resources, training, enewsletters, networking events, advice and guidance."*

[www.rainbownetwork.net.au/](http://www.rainbownetwork.net.au/)



For two hours I shared some stories with a small but committed gathering of teachers, health professionals and homophobia-curious others. As with all of my sessions I started by asking people why they had come along and what would race through their mind if they were told that they were going on a 38-week national challenging homophobia tour (e.g. see Shepparton blog).

I was taken a back when one academic spoke.

*"I came to your book launch in February and, I hate to say it, I remember thinking, 'I hope you don't get killed'...I want to know how it all went now that you're back..."*

It's easy now for myself and others to look back on such statements and smile, if not laugh. With virtually the tour complete, those who have followed the tour, even from a distance can see that I was relatively safe and supported in all parts of Australia. Yet at the start of the year most people had fears, on some level, even if it was my truck breaking down.



Some of the other tour-related thoughts offered were telling of common questions, concerns or hopes.

*"I'd have to prepare myself to hear [people's stories]..."*

*"I know it's terrible but I thought, 'What will I wear?' because I'm going to so many different climates..."*

*"I'd wonder how to approach things... Things are going to be different in Toorak compared to Bundaberg..."*

*"I was just dreaming of Esperance and desert holidays..."*

*"How could I be passionate, but not go overboard with my message?..."*

*"I'd expect that there would be differences across the states, even the regions..."*

*"I'm thinking of staying with different people all over the country...I'd just find that exhausting..."*



*“I’d want to know where to get good coffee, good places to cycle, going jogging and bushwalking...That would be really important for me...”*

I spent the last portion of our two hours together, billed at ‘The Tour Diaries, previewing some of my findings. These included observations of the LGBT sector, LGBT (young) people, homophobia more generally in communities, where the future might lie and ongoing challenges. If interested, make sure you get to some post-tour events and hear more. :-)



Other events for my shortened week included a staff professional development session with an elite all-boys metropolitan school (for the record it was received, according to them, “very well”), a session with students and staff at the Centre for Adult Education Melbourne (CAE) and media engagements, both unexpected.

Since the start of my tour I have been phoning in each and every week at 9.10am Thursday mornings to ‘Freshly Doug’, an LGBT current affairs program on Melbourne’s gay and lesbian radio station, JOY FM ([www.currentaffairs.net.au/](http://www.currentaffairs.net.au/)).

On a journey where so much changes, I observed how much I craved routine. One important one was the weekly check in with Freshly Doug’s Doug Pollard. Wherever I was and whatever was happening I knew what I’d be doing each Thursday morning. An added bonus was I knew that my deadline for my weekly location blogs was Wednesday evening (and once on Thursday morning!) so that Doug had time to look over it and decide what he thought was radio-friendly and interesting. I can safely say that without this self-imposed deadline



I would be VERY far behind in my blogs, and also I'm sure Doug's crosses to me would have been less interesting.

So when Doug asked me to upgrade my 10-15 minute cross in my Melbourne week to a one-hour discussion as part of Freshly Doug's 'Digging Deeper' segment, I jumped at it. This was an interview that was much more personal than it was professional, and hats off to Doug for finding a way to dig deeper than I expected. The results can be found as a transcript at:

[www.currentaffairs.net.au/digging-deeper-with-daniel-witthaus/](http://www.currentaffairs.net.au/digging-deeper-with-daniel-witthaus/)

Podcasts of this one-hour segment and some other crosses over the year can be found at:

[www.cpod.org.au/page.php?id=165](http://www.cpod.org.au/page.php?id=165)

And coming full circle continued with my revisiting the ABC's Bush Telegraph program that I spoke to during a break in training with teachers and health professionals in Geelong during Week One of my tour in February (see Geelong blog). I spent some time talking with Bush Telegraph at ABC's Melbourne studios.

[www.abc.net.au/rn/bushtelegraph/stories/2010/3062366.htm](http://www.abc.net.au/rn/bushtelegraph/stories/2010/3062366.htm)

And then I headed off for a vanilla slice in one of my favourite parts of Melbourne.

