

# Talking Beyond 'That's So Gay': One cuppa at a time...

## The good news:

some rural, regional and remote (rrr) Australian communities have had conversations about moving Beyond 'That's So Gay' and the experience of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people.

## The bad news:

at best these conversations happened so long ago that locals cannot remember what exactly was said or who was involved. Sometimes there were examples where it got exciting there for a while, but now there is a return to silence.

A common response in these places was:

**"It's gone off the agenda since then..."**

It became clear that throughout 2010 the Beyond 'That's So Gay' Tour gave rrr Australia permission and an excuse to start a community conversation and/or revisit one almost forgotten. Even if they are ready, rrr communities do not always know how to talk about this.

The simple process that almost anyone can follow is what was repeated in 100s of everyday conversations with people in rrr communities:

Explain the context for the conversation. Mine was the Beyond 'That's So Gay' Tour. Yours could be your role and/or community concern;

**What are local experiences and observations of local LGBT young people?;**

**What are the challenges locals face in providing great support to these young people?**

**What do locals require to change the way they work in the immediate to short-term?**

Clues to help with these everyday conversations include:

## 1. Break the rrr Australian silence

The first step is breaking the silence that homophobia craves. Too often rrr communities reported waiting for an outsider and/or organisation to talk Beyond 'That's So Gay'. Everyday conversations are the starting point for a very different experience for LGBT people. Who are 3-5 local people you can have this conversation with? Who could you share this Summary Series with?

Note: in NO rrr location were Beyond 'That's So Gay' conversations and contacts exhausted.

## 2. Engage, Don't Provoke

Rather than assuming a Beyond 'That's So Gay' talk needs to be provoked or forced, seek to engage rrr communities in everyday conversations. It was for this reason the tour focused on challenging homophobia "one cuppa (and everyday conversation) at a time". Rrr Australia is ready for something different to the silent, homophobic and metro-centric status quo.

## 3. Don't Assume Homophobia

Unlikely people were engaged in the support of LGBT people. Their reasoning was simple, such as this seemingly unsupportive policeman: "I'm afraid they'll go into their own room and if we are not careful we'll lose 'em."

Similarly rrr communities wanted to help support LGBT young people. Said one rural LGBT worker: "I go to the footy club every Friday night to do the meat tray raffles... Yes I do...[laughs]...And each week they ask me how [the LGBT group] is going: the success stories, any problems, things they can help with, donations they can make...These are old cockies, potato farmers and the like...They are absolutely horrified that any child should be kicked out of home for any reason because they love their children and grandchildren..."



*Talking to rrr communities about Beyond 'That's So Gay' is not as hard as we think.*



# Talking Beyond 'That's So Gay': (cont.)

## One cuppa at a time...

### 4. How Is It, REALLY?

Rather than assuming how LGBT young people are faring locally, or how you'd like them to be doing, ask the questions:

- Are LGBT people openly thriving in your community?
- How are they REALLY doing?
- If you don't know, how could you find out more?

Said one regional teacher in a supportive school:

"You have got me thinking though... Are we providing what they need?... Maybe we do need to have a chat and rethink... Ask them, 'Was there anything that we could do differently to support you?...'"

### 5. Cover The Basics

Have current research evidence, support organisations and options to challenge basic homophobia (see 'Resources'). Most rrr areas don't have these "basics" in their bag of tricks.

**This is unnecessary.**

**We have the LGBT technology.**



It's the everyday conversations generated by the Beyond 'That's So Gay' Tour that lead to change. Rather than thinking we have to do something extraordinary, instead we could think about what we can do with the people around us. For 38 weeks worth of everyday rrr community examples, go to [www.thatssogay.com.au](http://www.thatssogay.com.au)

# Supportive people: Ensuring LGBT young people thrive

**"You forget the awkwardness, the intensity of all that once you've been accepted [by family, friends, work colleagues]...When you're young and you don't have that bag of tricks of experiences, it can be very confronting..."**

**Rural youth worker, 2010**

In Beyond 'That's So Gay': Challenging homophobia in Australian schools some basic steps of supporting LGBT young people who 'come out'.

When looking at how best to support lesbian, gay and bisexual young people (LGB) if they 'come out', the main areas typically considered are:

## 1. Confidentiality and privacy

Assure the young person of confidentiality.

## 2. Listen and be present

Listen, listen, listen  
Don't appear shocked, catastrophise or project your fears onto them.  
Be transparent about your knowledge and experience.

## 3. Affirming/reassuring young person

Affirm that their right to feel safe and supported in their community. Reassurance that they are not the "only gay in the village".  
Recognise that it takes a lot to disclose.

## 4. Provide information (see 'Resources')

Inform them of available resources. Learn more about local, state and territory-based supports. Look after yourself and secondary consultation.

## 5. Congratulations

Recognise the benefits of this young person disclosing. Congratulate yourself. Refrain from becoming the 'stage mother' of an LGBT young person.

## What Can I Really Do As One Person?

In rrr communities where there is an overwhelming silence about moving Beyond 'That's So Gay' there could be many reasons to feel defeated. Teachers, health professionals and homophobia-curious others often asked what they could realistically do when their rrr area did not have any identifiable LGBT supports.

Real examples help, especially of the many stories from young people across the breadth of rrr Australia. It seems that a recipe for success with LGBT young people is to ensure that they

have a solid foundation of support, and this is not as challenging as some might believe. If young people have one supportive person in each of their most important areas of life, then it's likely that they'll fare much better than their counterparts who don't.

For example, a young LGBT person with one supportive family member, one supportive friend at school, one supportive teacher and one supportive youth worker/sports coach/workmate will be traveling better than their LGBT sisters and brothers who don't.

It sounds like commonsense but for an isolated local worker in regional Australia these kind of targets in their work with LGBT young people



# Supportive people: (cont.)

## Ensuring LGBT young people thrive

can make the overwhelming and impossible seem that little bit more doable.

### Reframing Homophobia

In any interactions with teachers, health professionals and homophobia-curious others it is important to stress one of the less quoted research findings from the 'Writing Themselves In' research series (see 'Resources'): those young people who reframed homophobia as being the problem of others and not themselves (i.e. they did not take it personally) fared better than their peers who didn't.

Further information on how LGBT young people themselves reframed homophobia successfully can be found under the Peers Out(S) marketing Homophobia (P.O.S.H.) booklet: [www.latrobe.edu.au/ssay](http://www.latrobe.edu.au/ssay)

### Affirm Sexual Diversity, Challenge Homophobia

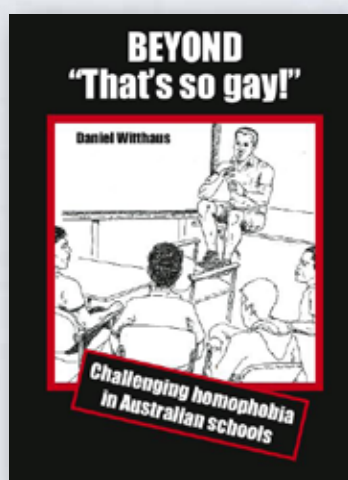
Rather than 'waiting for disclosure', teachers, health professionals and homophobia-curious others could send a powerful message of support and hope to all LGBT young people by affirming sexual diversity and challenging homophobia with ALL young people. Almost everything you'll need to do so can be found on the 'Resources' page.

### It Gets Better?

After 38 weeks of talking to rrr Australia, everyone is clear: they are over awareness-raising. For them they just want to know what to do. Not in a few years when educational utopia hits. Not when legislation is finally changed. Not when all the homophobes die out or are finally drowned out by an LGBT-friendly majority. They want to know what they can do NOW.



# Resources that could be useful: Moving Beyond 'That's So Gay'



## Beyond 'That's So Gay'

Challenging homophobia in Australia schools provides everything a teacher, health professional or homophobia-curious individual would need to effectively challenge and interrupt homophobia and affirm sexual diversity.

It's practical, entertaining and easy-to-follow. Beyond 'That's So Gay' is available from Hawker Brownlow Education.

[www.hbe.com.au](http://www.hbe.com.au)

## State and Territory-based organisations

Projects and services can change, however some useful starting points within each state and territory can be found at:

[www.thatssogay.com.au](http://www.thatssogay.com.au)

## Not Round Here

Not Round Here: Affirming Diversity, Challenging Homophobia is a groundbreaking challenging homophobia resource developed soon after the completion of the Australian Human Rights Commission's Outlink Project (1999-2000). Developed by Kenton Penley Miller and Mahamati for rural and regional settings, rather than assuming a metropolitan audience. This resource is fun, practical and full of great cartoons. Download free at:

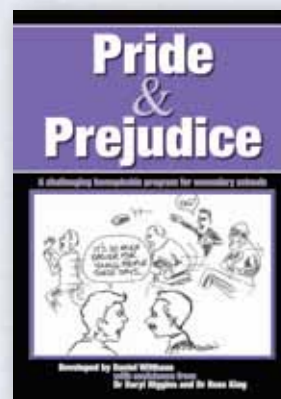
[www.hreoc.gov.au/pdf/human\\_rights/not\\_round\\_here.pdf](http://www.hreoc.gov.au/pdf/human_rights/not_round_here.pdf)



## Writing Themselves In 3

The third national study on the sexual health and wellbeing of same sex attracted and gender questioning young people. Everything you wanted to know about young people's everyday experiences and clues to ensuring they stay healthy, safe and supported.

[www.latrobe.edu.au/ssay](http://www.latrobe.edu.au/ssay)



## Pride & Prejudice

Pride & Prejudice: Challenging Homophobia Program for Everyday Classrooms is an easy-to-use educational package that educators can use to challenge homophobia and affirm sexual diversity in classrooms and other educational settings is available through Hawker Brownlow Education.

Formal evaluation Deakin University shows that the 6-week program significantly shifts student attitudes towards gay men and lesbians, and, more importantly, significantly reduces student homo-aggressive behaviour. Pride & Prejudice is available from Hawker Brownlow Education,

[www.hbe.com.au](http://www.hbe.com.au)

