

Everyday Homophobia in Australian Schools: Random Stories from the Road

Rural and regional Queensland:

"One of the young people was on the phone the other day and a boy came out, knocked it out of his hand and into the gutter and kicked it down to some water and called him a faggot..."

"Another young person was in class and a teacher was present and a boy said she should just take a pill to cure her homosexuality because it was wrong, a disease and a sickness...The teacher heard it and didn't say anything..."

"Another young person was suspended from school for kissing his boyfriend even though his straight friends kiss all the time...He was told that same sex relationships were not allowed at school...And this was a state school..."

Metropolitan South Australia:

"Venus", a young lesbian in metropolitan South Australia, identified as straight at high school, but painted a grim picture for the out gay students she knew. One young man "was [genuinely] convinced he would burn in hell". Another had a father who "was physically abusive towards him". Venus felt entirely unable to be out as same sex attracted at her [religious] school.

Rural and regional Victoria:

One young man spoke of recently deciding to change schools after being physically threatened and having his name with "dirty faggot" written on a wall. Responding to questions about her school's lack of awareness and support, a trans young person described how she had been through enough to ensure she had three lifetimes worth of self-esteem. Before she was

eventually left in peace, one young woman spoke of being regularly "beaten up" over her early years of secondary school because other girls were scared she would "hit on them". Attending a religious private school, another young woman told stories of being "ranted at" in relation to the Bible and feeling unsupported by her teachers. Some gay and lesbian teachers were clear that they could not be open about their sexual identity or support her because they were fearful of losing their jobs under the Victorian Equal Opportunity exemptions in religious organisations.

Rural Western Australia:

One young indigenous man had been caught by his friends "in a sexual act with another boy". That formerly close-knit group of friends has now ousted him. He has reportedly been beaten up a few times by those friends and others and "his mother is worried he is going down the path of self-harm".

Rural Northern Territory:

One he described as young, gay and indigenous. "He cops it from the kids at school. Then he goes home and cops it from his family."

When I asked if "copping it" meant that he experienced physical violence, "Michael" answered, "I honestly don't know mate, he won't tell me." Posing that many would say that being gay and indigenous do not go together and if this was his experience, he was clear, "yes, basically this is why this kid's head is f**ked".

Rural and regional New South Wales:

At first Sal was reluctant to be a part of any awareness raising panel. Then there was one opportunity to go to

a local school.

"It was fine...I think it was a Year 10 health class...For some reason that year, and the year after, there was this very big group of baby dykes [i.e. young lesbians]... [The homophobia session] kind of backfired because they said, 'We know it's OK. Mostly the issue is that it has become 'so cool' that all these non-gay people are pretending to be [lesbian or bisexual] so they can hang out with us and they end up being 'try hards'..."

To read more about the interviews, stories and events that informed this summary series, go to: www.thatssoqay.com.au



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