Media Release: It’s about bloody time we say ‘oi!’ to rural homophobia.

A new challenging rural homophobia campaign using the Aussie catchcry ‘oi’ is being launched to mark the International Day Against Homophobia (IDAHO).

The National Institute for Challenging Homophobia Education (NICHE), Australia’s only national rural challenging homophobia organisation, will launch the 'oi!' challenging rural homophobia campaign this coming Saturday 17th May. The 'oi!' campaign aims to give people in rural communities the simple strategies to challenge everyday homophobia and start everyday conversations about lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) people.

“Many people in rural communities – gay and straight – report that they feel uncomfortable about the way that others treat LGBTI people. Yet most of them don’t speak up, because they don’t know what to do or say,“ said NICHE Founder and author of *Beyond Priscilla: one gay man, one gay truck, one big idea*, Daniel Witthaus.

“Rural communities tell us that they feel more confident to challenge other people when they use ‘so gay’, ‘fag’ or dyke’ if they know what to say. ‘oi’ is something that country folk, especially men, feel most comfortable using to start the challenging homophobia ball rolling.”

Research evidence from the likes of Latrobe University and the Young and Well Cooperative Research Centre shows that young LGBTI people, especially in rural communities still face everyday homophobia.

“Even today, 20 years ‘Beyond Priscilla’, homophobia is still hurting rural Australia. The evidence is now beyond debate. Communities talk about two things: rural youth suicide and young people having no choice but to leave their hometowns for the big smoke.”

Over the coming month, resources such as posters, info kits and activities for local LGBTI people and their allies will be sent to rural communities that NICHE has worked with in the last two years. The hope is that rural communities will share with others what works and what doesn’t.

“Too often challenging homophobia materials are targeted at people living in the big smoke. ‘oi’ is different.”

The launch will happen as part of a two-day IDAHO extravaganza in Shepparton, Victoria, which will include the local Mayor doing a rainbow flag-raising ceremony.

“It’s about bloody time we say ‘oi’ to rural homophobia. Young people in rural Australia all agree that what makes the biggest difference is whether the people around them support them or not. We can make a difference in country Australia, one ‘oi’ at a time.”

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**For more on the ‘oi’ Campaign & NICHE:** [niche.thatssogay.com.au/oi-campaign/](http://www.niche.thatssogay.com.au/oi-campaign/)

**IDAHO\***: Each year on May 17th, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) people celebrate the International Day Against Homophobia (IDAHO). In more recent years we’ve seen the addition of biphobia, intersexism and transphobia (hence you’ll see some call it IDAHOBIT, to many a Lord of the Rings fan’s delight).