

**Matrix  
Guild**  
VICTORIA INC.  
**September 2012**

A huge thank you to everyone who attended the last gathering at Albert Street Food & Wine for the month of August

A lovely afternoon with great coffee, delicious food and wonderful company was enjoyed by all. We hope that you are enjoying the recent social gatherings held on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of each month and we certainly look forward to catching up with you soon.



Our next get together is on **Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> September 2pm – 4pm** and we hope that if you are free so you can pop along and join us for afternoon tea.

**RSVP: 14 September 2012**

Sharon Stanton text or phone 0419 992 966 or respond to this e-mail. Or Anna Cook [Annecook13@hotmail.com](mailto:Annecook13@hotmail.com) M-0448002870

Have a wonderful day keep warm and we look forward to catching up with you at one of our social events soon.

Cheers

Sharon

**Venue: Penny Black Bar & Café**

**420 Sydney Road Brunswick**

**Nearest Tram stop is 23 (one up from the stop for Wine & Food Café), North Coburg tram 19 from corner of Elizabeth & Flinders Sts, along Elizabeth St, Royal Pde and Sydney Rd.**

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# From Grey Power to Gay Power: the Right to Equality by Shane Green (selected bits)

The Age, 4 August 2012

Beyond the usual trepidation about ageing, for gay, lesbian, transgender and bisexual people the prospect of aged care is particularly daunting and frightening. At a time when they are most vulnerable, they fear discrimination and victimisation, not only from carers but from fellow residents.

A week ago, there was a modest announcement by the federal government that it would develop a national LGBTI aged-care strategy. In the churn of the news cycle, it was noticed by few. But for many, it is hugely important.

Jo Harrison, a gerontologist and expert in the field from the University of South Australia, says the proposed strategy and the recognition of older LGBTI people as a special needs group are groundbreaking. The changes, she says, are the culmination of years of research, education and advocacy across the LGBTI community, who, she says, have been fighting for a virtually "invisible" group.

"Older LGBTI people have been mostly afraid to be open about their identities for fear of discrimination and persecution, and have lived hidden lives," Dr Harrison says. "These changes begin to redress that seriously negative situation and provide them with safety and security."

The issue received some serious attention two years ago during the Productivity Commission's Caring for Older Australians inquiry. The problem was clearly defined in a submission from the National LGBT Health Alliance, which said that seniors from these communities had endured decades of stigma, discrimination and exclusion by the state and mainstream society.

The alliance noted that homosexuality had not been decriminalised in most states until the 1980s and 1990s, and the World Health Organisation had kept homosexuality on its list of diseases until 1992. And, of course, same-sex relationships are still not fully recognised.

"This means today's LGBTI seniors have lived well over half their lives being considered criminals by the state, diseased by the medical profession and excluded by mainstream society," the alliance said. "LGBTI people, and especially older LGBTI people, have developed protective mechanisms to shield themselves from stigma, discrimination and violence."

Aged carers needed to understand "the abuse and harm that many LGBTI people have suffered throughout their lives — harm that in many instances has not been healed".

Care Connect, which provides support for people to live independently at home, has managed to secure federal funding for specific age care packages for LGBTIs in south-east Queensland.

The idea emerged from a connection established between the group's Brisbane branch manager and the Queensland Association for Healthy Communities, which promotes the health of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people.

The association conducted a survey of its communities in 2008, finding that 40 per cent of respondents reported a negative experience with aged care based on their sexuality or gender identification. A lack of knowledge, acceptance and understanding were the key issues. Asked about their concerns on ageing, 61 per cent listed the lack of specific accommodation.

"Nobody likes the prospect of ageing," Care Connect's chief executive, Paul Ostrowski, says. "But for people from this community, it seems the fear is actually acute."

Ostrowski says one of the main concerns is that same-sex partners will not be recognised by an aged-care facility, meaning that instead of contacting a resident's partner in the event of health or other issues, institutions will instead turn to the resident's children from a former relationship.

There is also the fear of prejudice, stemming from the fact that much of the aged-care sector is faith-based. Ostrowski says this is more a perception than a reality, and that his organisation, which is secular, has never encountered a report of discrimination by a faith-based organisation.

There is also the attitude of fellow residents. "Take the scenario of somebody in a country town of 20,000, 30,000 or 40,000 people," he says. "They may face going into a residential-care facility room by room with . . . people who made their lives absolute hell when they were going through school."

A lot of people, Ostrowski says, wonder why the new approach is necessary, given society's growing acceptance of people's sexuality. But it is the experience of people now in their 70s and 80s that matters.

"Many of them have not declared their sexual orientation even to their own families, and if they have, they may have been cut off by their own kids, or judged by their own kids," Ostrowski says. "We've had people approach us who have been so acutely sensitive about their own privacy who said, 'You can't even go to my doctor over this because my doctor doesn't know. Don't send anything to my home address because my family doesn't know.'"

Ostrowski says the training and recruitment of Care Connect's staff is a crucial first step, from the executive level down. "I'd always thought that I was completely comfortable with the communities, but then you realise it's not whether we're comfortable or not, it's the kind of prejudice they have lived with that is the issue, and being sensitive to that."

Care Connect then recruited staff from the LGBTI communities, who are now working to raise awareness of the services.

Even when people have sought help from Care Connect, some have chosen to "de-gay" their house by taking down photos and closing wardrobes during carer visits. "And we've had to say, 'Look, you don't need to do that; this is a legitimate service'," Ostrowski says.

Beyond the organisations such as Care Connect, there is also encouraging work by groups including the Matrix Guild, which supports lesbians over 40.

Matrix's Anneke Deutsch says the prospect of going into aged care is frightening enough, but for lesbians, there are added fears.

"We have a life where we live with our partner or hang out with our lesbian friends, and then we go out and face the heterosexual world," Deutsch says. "But once we go into aged care, we don't have any lesbian space any more.

"Because we're vulnerable, and because we're worried we might be passed over — if somebody's homophobic, they might just walk past and leave us on the bedpan a bit longer than they need to — a lot of women who might have been quite out in their normal lives will go back into the closet, because they feel it will assure them better care."

The guild has produced a publication called *We Live Here Too* for aged-care services, aimed at helping them provide the support that lesbians need. Members have also been going into aged-care facilities to talk to staff. The booklet includes some encouraging tales of progress.

In one case, Helen was visiting her friend Maria, who had dementia. At the nursing home where she lived, she would take Maria's arm and walk with her. When staff didn't intervene after a fellow resident made derogatory remarks about them being lesbians, Helen raised it with the director of nursing. Staff apologised at a subsequent meeting, and it was made clear to residents the remarks were not acceptable.

To see the whole article go to: <http://www.theage.com.au/national/from-grey-power-to-gay-power-the-right-to-equality-20120803-23leb.html>

# MATRIX GUILD OF VIC ACTIVITIES/PROJECTS

## **EDUCATION TO STOP DISCRIMINATION**

Sue Leigh and Anneke Deutsch have done a training presentation to staff at the Daylesford Aged Care Facility. We are in the process of publicising that we are available and would like to give more presentations. Anneke has been invited to address the annual Better Practice conference held by the Aged Care Standards and Accreditation Agency (The body that accredits Aged Care providers), about What Lesbians Want from Aged Care. There were about 300 managers of Aged Care facilities from around Australia there, so we hope to drum up some more invitations to do staff inservices. After her talk, three people approached her saying they had gay or lesbian residents, and were intending to do the course on How to make their service more inclusive of us (run by Gay & Lesbian Health Victoria). It looks like we now have about 4 options of lesbian-friendly Aged Care institutions in Melbourne. Then on the 12th Sept Anneke is speaking at Uniting Care's annual conference and will be part of a GLBTI panel and in October Sue and Anneke will present to the Allied Health and supervising staff of Port Phillip HACC services. If you work in Aged Care, either in a facility or with services that are provided in the home, please get in touch with us and invite us to do an inservice at your organisation. Call Anneke on 0427 482 976

## **LESBIAN VOLUNTEER VISITOR PROGRAM**

Matrix has had many calls and referrals from isolated older lesbians (or their social workers), some of whom are in Aged Care. Some feel compelled to return to the closet, particularly if the facility is run by a religious organisation. As a committee of 5 lesbians, with many other commitments, we are having trouble keeping up with the demand. We see an urgent need to tap into the lesbian community and establish a Lesbian Volunteer Community Visitor Program. Anneke and Sue are currently exploring funding options. We need a paid coordinator's position so that volunteers can be trained, supported, debriefed and matched to those sisters requesting our support. Now that GLBTI are officially a "special needs" group under the Federal Aged Care Act, there are more possibilities opening up, in that we may be able to get government funding. Other funding options include a raffle of an Olivia cruise.

## **NATIONAL LGBTI AGING AND AGED CARE STRATEGY**

Anneke has had some written input into the National LGBTI Ageing and Aged Care Strategy to keep the idea of the Old Dyke's Home alive. Now that we are recognised as a "special Needs" group we should be able to get bed funding just as other cultures do (eg The Ukrainian Aged Care facility).

### **Are you a lesbian or same-sex-attracted woman?**

I am looking for women who are interested in taking part in research into same-sex relationships and lesbian families since 1945. If you are a woman of any age who is or has been attracted to other women and would be willing to take part in an interview about your ideas and experience of same-sex relationships, families and / or lesbian parenting, please contact Rebecca Jennings (ARC Research Fellow in the Department of Modern History, Macquarie University) at [Rebecca.Jennings@mq.edu.au](mailto:Rebecca.Jennings@mq.edu.au) or on 0403811885. Participation in this research is entirely voluntary and there will be no financial remuneration to participants.

Thank you for your help

Rebecca Jennings, ARC Future Fellow

Department of Modern History, Politics and International Relations

Tel: 02 9850 7861

**YOU ARE INVITED TO**  
**MATRIX GUILD OF VICTORIA INC**  
**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

Date: Tuesday, 16 October 2012

Venue: Betty Day Centre,  
67 Argyle St, St Kilda

Time: 6.30PM

Light supper provided



**MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTIONS ARE NOW DUE!!!** (except for those who joined or renewed in the last couple of months). Print out the attached form if your details have changed. You can pay by EFT or by cheque.

See link to website:

<http://www.matrixguildvic.org.au/membership.htm>

## **Matrix Guild's Managing Committee**

Meets 6.00pm the 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday of the month

To get venue details - 0419 992 966

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### **SHEBAR - Women Only Events**

***1<sup>st</sup> Saturday Every Month***

Fun and friendly atmosphere with regular live acts, female DJs and special events.

The Provincial Hotel

299 Brunswick St Fitzroy

[www.shebar.org](http://www.shebar.org) - Call Sharon & Andrea 0419 992 966

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For photos and information about our fundraiser events, back copies of newsletters, Matrix research reports, lesbian inclusive practice guidelines booklet and lots more go to:

### **THE MATRIX WEB PAGE**

**[www.matrixguildvic.org.au](http://www.matrixguildvic.org.au)**

Matrix now has a facebook page so please help us to make it more relevant to your needs by giving us feedback

**<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Matrix-Guild-of-Vic-Inc/223994251013284#!/pages/Matrix-Guild-of-Vic-Inc/223994251013284?sk=wall>**

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