

To Whom This Concern,

I was watching this Community Affairs Committee, discuss suicide in Australia. I wish to include this submission for the Committee.

One of the groups at extreme risk that wasn't talked about is, Gay & Lesbian's especially Teens. The problem is coming from, the federal governments failure to treat Gay & Lesbians as 1st class members of society.

Teens who are struggling to come to terms with their sexuality, find themselves alone, scared, embarrassed etc. Which in some cases leads them to think, there is NO way out besides suicide.

The Government continues to stop steps towards equality in state and federal laws, this is sending the wrong message into the community. It tells the community that, homophobia is ok because the Government is advocating it. The government has no basis for these views on Gay & Lesbians, besides a few very outdated bible verses which has nothing to do with a 21st century Government. Maybe if this was the middle ages sure, but we know better now look at discrimination against women or aboriginals! Our own not so distant past tells us, that discrimination against minority groups isn't something a government should be advocating.

However even though there is evidence to suggest, that Gay & Lesbian teens need increased amount of support. (which some can be found from the Australian Institute paper on Mapping Homophobia in Australia. Which was included along with this submission as an attachment)

At the state and federal levels not much gets done, to help these teens at high risk.

On a personal level, I struggled with my sexuality all through school. I was bullied and called names, each and every day for 10 years. So I began to think that being gay must not be a "normal" thing, so I denied it to myself told myself I would get over it. But that didn't work, my sexuality was NO different from my heterosexual friends. I came out, and began realising and accepting myself for who I am. I was one of the lucky ones, I had a great support system and understanding friends and family. However countless others aren't so lucky;

Back in 2000 a 55 year old man with the surname Gay, had been teased about his last name his whole life.

One day he lost it, took himself down to a local Gay & Lesbian cafe took out a gun.

He shot 7 Gay & Lesbian people, shouting as he was shooting "that he was a Christian soldier, working for God, Jesus doesn't not want these people in his heaven"

Early 2001 a young man named Mark had accepted his sexual orientation, until he was repeatedly told by his church that God did not support him being homosexual. He tried in vain to explain to them he didn't choose this, it was who he was.

Mark couldn't take the pressure anymore, he ended his life leaving this note to God "I just don't know how else to fix this."

Mary Wallner, a very devoted Christian was led by the Church to condemn her Lesbian daughter, after Anna her daughter hanged herself. Her grieving mother Mary now says "If I can sheer just one person away from the pain and anguish I've been living, then maybe Anna's death will have meaning."

In Wollongong 8 years ago a group of guys went out for some fun. That night ended with them finding some poor innocent Gay teenager, took him down to the beach held his head under water while they beat him to death!!!!

The coroner report said they were holding him under water so hard, there was sand all the way down into his lungs.

There are countless heartbreaking stories like these!!!!!!

How can the government let homophobia continue???????

As thousands of doctors, psychiatrists, psychologists, counselors and educators, have stated definitely that homosexual orientation is as natural as heterosexual orientation.

Which then means the governments need to tackle this problem head on, by saying that homophobia in this country is not expectable.

The Tasmanian government have a program, that gives students a anti-homophobia kits at school. Which educates students that its ok to be gay or lesbian, I think enough young kids have taken there lives.

Some would say that this encourages kids to become Gay or Lesbian, but nothing could be further from the truth.

Sexual orientation cannot be changed or altered by people learning about equality and tolerance towards the Gay & Lesbian community. Kids need to grow up with the understanding that, everyone is equal!

Not hearing Governments says its "not natural" or not being granted basic human rights to allow marriage or adoption!!!

Also a big issue within this field, same-sex couples who are raising children. The kids in these situations, are subjected to the same kinds of discrimination at schools. Which again stems from federal government unwilling to provide, these kids security within there family. By allowing the childs parents (a same-sex couple) basic human rights to get marriage, and in certain situations adopt these children as there own. Failure to do so continues to devalues the childs family unit, which can lead to depression and even suicide.

How in the 21st century are we still treating a few minority groups as 2nd class citizens is beyond me, and fails every Gay & Lesbian and there families. This country is far from a fair and just society, kids growing up in these situations were discrimination is apart of there daily lives, is definately not going to encourage the best from them to become fully active members of society.

For the governments to continue to make Gay & lesbians feel like 2nd class citizens, is a complete joke and it fails the young kids who really need help.

I believe that at a federal level laws must be changed to stop Gay & Lesbians being treated like 2nd class citizens, then ALL schools and other insitutions must be made to follow a anti-homophobic frame-work to allow kids to grow up feeling equal and treating others with equality. Otherwise this will continue to happen generation after generation, its time now for Gay & Lesbians to be allowed by federal law to be treated as equal members of society. This has gone on long enough and too many have already died becasue of the Australian governments failure to protect Gay & Lesbians.

Please take this seriously, otherwise the blood from these unnessesary deaths is on the governments hands.

I imagine a world where, kids can grow up to feel excepted, loved, cared for NO matter what there sexual orientation.

Thanks for your time, if you would like any further comments or information regarding this please don't hesitate to contact.

Kind Regards,

Jake Lukus