Lesbian Gay Bisexual Trans Intersex Legal Service Inc.

Annual Report

2015

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Acknowledgements

This Annual Report covers the period 2014 to 2015 and has been presented at the Lesbian Gay Bisexual Trans Intersex Legal Service Inc. Annual General Meeting on 24 October 2015.

This Report will also be made available online at <u>www.lgbtilegalservice.org</u>.

LGBTI Legal Services Inc. affirms that the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are the Indigenous inhabitants of Australia and acknowledges their unique relationship with their ancestral country. In particular, we acknowledge the Turrbal and Jagera peoples, the traditional custodians of the land in and around Brisbane, and pay respect to their elders, past and present.

The Service acknowledges and thanks the contributions to this Report from members and volunteers of the Service, and particularly Lia Shea, Tom Clark, Andrea Stein, Stephen Page, Eliza Sullivan and Priyata Pal for their contributions to this Report.

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We welcome all donations. All donations over \$2.00 are tax deductible.

About the Service

Who are we?

The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Intersex Legal Service Inc. is a non-profit and unfunded community-based legal service, which began service on 7 July 2010 and was officially launched on 1 December 2010 by The Hon. Michael Kirby AC CMG.

The Service is staffed entirely by volunteers. The team of around 50 includes:

- (a) the management committee;
- (b) the Executive Director;
- (c) three Directors:
 - (i) Client Services;
 - (ii) Operations; and
 - (iii) Law Reform; and
- (d) lawyers, evening coordinators and legal assistants.

Mission statement

The Service recognises the difficulties faced by the LGBTI community and seeks to assist the Queensland LGBTI community to gain access to justice through the provision of legal and social welfare services. We also endeavour to provide community legal education activities and resources in order to increase awareness of legal rights and responsibilities for the LGBTI community in Queensland. The Service includes a law reform division, which is actively involved in advocating for law reform and human rights.

What do we do?

We provide legal advice and information to clients who have legal problems which arise from their identification as LGBTI and/or because they feel more comfortable in dealing with a solicitor with specific skills, interest and understanding of LGBTI legal issues and/or the barriers experienced by LGBTI peoples in accessing the legal system. We also actively participate in law reform on LGBTI legal issues, as well as community legal education and awareness raising.

Hannah's Story

Earlier in the same week of the Trans Kids Seminar in May, 2015 a mother and her teenage child accessed Open Doors. The mother was quite distressed about her child identifying as transgender. After sitting with both her and her child for a while we discussed some support options and mentioned that the Trans Kids Seminar was on during that week. The next week she shared that she had gleaned some valuable information from the seminar and had spoken to some members of PFLAG, Dr. Stathis, and even booked an appointment with him for her child. It was amazing to see her progress from being unable to comprehend her child's identity to actively using correct pronouns and supporting her child's choice of clothing.

2015 Reports

The LGBTI Legal Service is pleased to present the following reports for the 2014-2015 year.

President's Report

The LGBTI Legal Service was incorporated in 2009 after a need was identified within the LGBTI community for a specialised community legal service. The Service seeks to assist Queensland LGBTI communities to gain access to justice through the provision of legal and social welfare services. We operate on Aboriginal land and acknowledge and pay our respects to the traditional custodians of the land.

LGBTI people in Queensland face situations that are unique and require a tailored and sensitive legal approach to our issues. Discrimination on a systemic and individual level remains entrenched in society and in our laws. The diversity of legal issues we see at the LGBTI Legal Service is reflective of the diversity in our community: trans kids wanting to transition, prospective parents wanting information about their rights, victims of discrimination and harassment wanting equal access to services and public spaces, workers dismissed or vilified for being gay and compounded issues of race and disability that serve to make sexuality and gender diversity all the more heartbreaking and difficult to address.

The LGBTI Legal Service exists in order to highlight laws that leave us wanting for justice and to provide practice access to justice where it would otherwise be missed.

We have come a long way in relation to LGBTI rights and it has been encouraging over the years of the Service to have been a part of legal processes for change, including seeing the realisation of our recommendations for LGBTI protection in the 2013 changes to Commonwealth discrimination laws. However, we still have a long way to go with the urgent need for more change to ensure an equal legal footing. Law reform issues remain and extend beyond the well known campaign for marriage equality. LGBTI asylum seekers continue to face stereotypes and discrimination in their applications, domestic violence remains a hidden and destructive force in LGBTI relationships, transgender people continue to face harassment, vilification and trauma in gendered spaces such as prisons, health services, immigration detention, sports clubs and schools. Gay men are placed at risk by the homosexual advance defence which allows a plea of provocation in cases of a non-violent sexual advance and many gay men still carry the stigma of criminal convictions dating back to when homosexuality was an illegal act. Indigenous LGBTI people and people with disabilities face double or triple burdens of oppression and are fighting for land rights or accessible services at the same time as raising awareness of gender and sexuality issues. The LGBTI Legal Service stands in solidarity with you all. The Service has a responsibility to remind those with legislative influence that we are still not all equal and that the process of change must continue to gain momentum until substantive equality is achieved.

On a practical level, as well as operating our Wednesday evening advice service, we have run community legal education sessions on the topics of transgender kids, employment discrimination and produced factsheets and a burgeoning social media presence.

Many LGBTI people have experienced a lifetime of discrimination including, but not limited to, homophobia. The ability to turn up at a service that they know will not make hetero-normative assumptions about their partners, their genders and their families is a welcome relief and provides much needed access to advice and assistance.

I would like to thank our hard working volunteers for committing their time to the Service. I would like to thank our Executive Director and each of our three Directors for their hard work throughout the year. Thank you also to our committee and a special mention to Mel Brewer, as well as Camielle Donaghey who is leaving the committee after many years as treasurer. Thank you to QuAC for providing us with a professional and accessible space.

I look forward to another year of working with our community towards a goal of substantive equality.

Matilda Alexander

Treasurer's Report

See Annexure

Camielle Donaghey

Executive Director's Report

2015 has been a year of continued growth for the LGBTI Legal Service – and its 5th birthday!

First and foremost, we've formalised our new structure supported by three amazing directors – Andrea Stein (Client Services), Lia Shea (Operations) and Tom Clark (Law Reform). The work that each of Andrea, Lia and Tom put in is astonishing, and often goes by completely unseen. I can't adequately express my gratitude for their commitment and enthusiasm.

On 18 April 2015, we had our first fundraising event for quite some time – Not a Drag, Queen Trivia at the Brunswick Hotel. The event was a huge success and, in addition to the fun everyone had (thanks in large part to the hilarious Abril LaTrene), over \$1,000 was raised for the Service. The feedback from that event was universally glowing, and we're now organising another for our Christmas party.

We've also had stalls at the Sunshine Coast Pride Festival, Brisbane Pride Festival, IDAHOT, Queerosity and various other LGBTI rallies – continuing to get in touch with the community and promote the Service. It was exciting to see the Service get the most bottle tops, and \$300, at Grill'd Fortitude Valley's Local Matters Campaign (in a landslide win to boot)!

From an internal perspective, we also celebrated our 5th anniversary with a group of volunteers, again at the Brunswick Hotel. The Service has come a long way since its inception and it was wonderful to take the time to celebrate it with those who make it all possible.

On 27 October 2015, the Service is sponsoring a screening of the popular film 'Gayby Baby' at Parliament House. With a number of MPs and other community leaders attending, this is an exciting opportunity for the Service.

Law reform and community education projects have also been successful this year, thanks in no small part to the assistance offered by law firms, universities and other community legal centres.

After over a year of work (and exceptional support from Fiona Thatcher and Anna Brown), the Service released a discussion paper – 'Historical criminal treatment of consensual sexual activity between men', which is available on our website. From this, we hope that the Queensland Government follows the lead of other states in correcting the injustices of convictions for consensual sexual activity.

The change in government has also seen greater interest in LGBTI issues, which the Service has taken an active role in, most recently providing submissions on the *Relationships (Civil Partnerships)* and *Other Acts Amendment Bill 2015* (Qld). We are keen to continue working with the Queensland Government on reforms for the LGBTI community, including the unequal age of consent and, following a presentation by Alana Heffernan, exceptions to the *Anti-Discrimination Act 1991* (Qld).

In May, we held a 'Trans kids rights' seminar, which attracted over 65 attendees from a variety of backgrounds. That event received fantastic feedback, and while writing this we are busy organising a follow up seminar focusing on the issues affecting trans kids in schools.

Even with all of the above, our continuing goal remains providing legal assistance to LGBTI individuals who need it. In our five years, we've provided over 600 instances of legal advice to over 450 clients – an exceptional feat given the Service is run only by volunteers.

I had originally written that 'our client numbers have stabilised this year'. Nothing could be further than the truth. This year, we've seen a rise of 15% in the number of clients, and a 26% rise in the number of appointments. The clients that we are seeing have more and more complex issues. For my initial thought to be 'things are steady' is a testament to the efforts of our volunteers dealing with this increased demand and the hard work that they put in every Wednesday night. As always, we are keen to take on more volunteers (in all aspects of the Service) so that we can continue to accommodate the need.

Finally, as always, I need to return to our volunteers. Every year, the support they provide is what keeps the Service running and assisting the community, and I hope they each feel as proud as they should of that. Personally, I can't thank them enough for all the work they do, always with a smile.

Having passed through its baby years, the LGBTI Legal Service is now well and truly into the toddler phase and each coming year is going to see it growing faster and faster.

Emile McPhee

April's story

April is a transgender woman from Western Australia. She has been on hormonal reassignment therapy for 8 years and says she had never felt more confident in herself as a female. She was excited that she had successfully had her passport re-issued to reflect her true identity, and was looking forward to the opportunity of re-entering the workplace and establishing herself in a job she would find fulfilling.

However, in August, her hopes were shattered when, in an interview conducted at a wellknown employment network agency, she was told that "as a transgendered female you will never get a job." As a result of her treatment in that interview, April felt nervous when walking down the street and felt acute anxiety in carrying out daily activities such as walking into a shop. She described feeling as if there was a big sign above her head saying "Transgender Woman Here" which, coupled with the stigma attached to remarks made to her earlier, led to a fear of ridicule she had not previously experienced.

April's counsellor was unable to find a specialist service in Perth to assist her and suggested she contact our Service here in Brisbane. One of our discrimination lawyers was able to offer her advice over the telephone, as well as facilitating her shift to an alternative employment network agency. Shortly after her consultation, April contacted us again to express her gratitude to both the lawyer and the evening co-ordinators who were rostered on that night. She commented that her confidence had been restored in the knowledge that she had legal rights, and was grateful for the empathy and support shown to her by the volunteer members of our organisation.

Events



Our people

Management Committee

President	Matilda Alexander	
Treasurer	Jack Nolan (Camielle Donaghey departing)	
Secretary	Alana Heffernan	
Members	Mark Thomas, Rocky Malone, Johanna Little, Lia Shea	
Service management		
Executive Director	Emile McPhee	
Director (Client Services)	Andrea Stein	
Director (Operations)	Lia Shea	
Director (Law Reform)	Tom Clark	
Lawyers		
Principal Lawyer	Matilda Alexander	
Lawyers	Stephen Page, Crispian Carlowe, Mona Emera, Patrick Brown, Scott McDougall, Sophia Bookallil, Alana Heffernan, Mitch Hauser, Arlene Stanovitch, Amy Chestnutt, Diane Wright, Shannon Chen, Faileen James, Kate Volk	
Service support		
Evening Coordinators	Drew Lauchland, Fergus Harte, Helen Hawksworth, Isaac Day, Jack Nolan, Jayme-Lynn Ellis, Jess Davidson, Jordyn Jones, Lauren Huckstepp, Philippa Dryden, Stephanie Wong, Wayne Craven, Sam Turner, Joanne Choy, Jack Longley, Wil Alam	
Legal Assistants	Eliza Sullivan, Jessica Davidson, Amelia Spring, Barbara Usselev, Charleton O'Brien, Chia-Yi Kuo, Fergus Harte, Isaac Buckland, Isaac Day, James Halliday, Jayme-Lynn Ellis, Joel Mellish, Julia Scott, Natalie Mcintosh, Prashilta Naidu, Priyata Pal, Sam Turner	
Law Reformers	Jack Nolan, Priyata Pal, Prashilta Naidu, Wil Alam, Lia Shea, Johanna Little, Charleton O'Brien	

Former volunteers

We wish to thank everyone else who has volunteered their time, assistance and support in some way or another over the past year. Most importantly, we recognise the amazing contribution by Camielle Donaghey as Treasurer, now taking on the exciting new challenge of a second child!

Awards

To celebrate the Service's 5th year we awarded a number of our volunteers. The 2015 awards are:

Outstanding Service Award	Drew Lauchland
Rising Star Awards	Eliza Sullivan and Jess Davidson
Volunteer of the Year	Emile McPhee
Founding Volunteer Award	Stephen Page, Mark Thomas, Patrick Brown, Matilda Alexander (with special recognition also to Julie Howes and Merran Lawler)

Tribute



We pay special tribute to Kathy Noble, one of the fiercest advocates for trans rights who was taken from us this year. Kathy was honest and open. She was always willing to share everything to assist others no matter where they were on their path. Kathy was part of the Service when it first opened and is richer because of her. You will be missed Kathy, but never forgotten, and your work will continue.

Supporters

The Service would like to extend thanks to the following organisations and individuals:

- (a) Queensland Aids Council (QuAC) for the ongoing use of their space and resources;
- (b) Caxton Legal Centre and QAILS (James Farrell) for their never ending support;
- (c) Anna Brown (HRLC) for her mentoring and guidance in law reform;
- (d) Allens (particularly Fiona Thatcher) and Minter Ellison (particularly Nicole Morgan and Megan Kavanagh) for pro bono support and graciously sharing their knowledge and resources;
- (e) Dr Stephen Stathis and Prof Jennifer Batch for giving up their time and sharing their knowledge at seminars;
- (f) Phil Browne (BLAG) for his passion and commitment;
- (g) Peter Black and Brisbane Pride Festival for their support and involvement;
- (h) Brisbears for their amazing contribution from the Brisbears Community Grants Scheme; and
- (i) UQ Pro Bono Centre (Jennifer Gibbons and Monica Taylor) for the programs and assistance offered to the Service.



1775 Facebook Likes



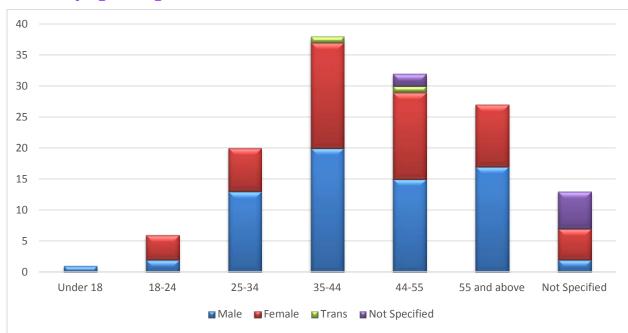
418 Twitter Followers

Statistics & Demographics

Since commencing advice sessions in 2010, we have assisted some 467 clients, a number attending the Service more than once. Below is a snapshot of clients at the Service over the last year.

Clients demographic

	2014-2015	2013-2014
Total clients	103	91
New clients	95	84
Repeat (existing) clients	8	7
Total appointments	137	108
Identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander	3	3
With a disability	26	20



Clients by age and gender

Legal issues

Problem type	Proportion
Family	27%
Discrimination	15%
Property	14%
Employment	11%
Criminal	7%
Domestic violence	4%
Other civil	4%
Wills and probate	4%

Some words from volunteers

Stephen Page, Lawyer

When I first learnt of the proposal to create the Service, I grabbed it with hands. I immediately rang and emailed a whole bunch of colleagues, to try and rope them into becoming volunteers. Several came along to the first meeting of volunteers, and several have continued on and off to be volunteers. I was just not prepared to allow what I saw as a long overdue and much needed service to fail. I wanted to do all I could to make it succeed. As luck would have it, I was rostered on the first night in July, 2010. We did not have a client! The other lawyer and volunteers that night thought I was mad when I brought with me a bottle of pink bubbles and a pink cake. Such a moment I thought needed celebration - and we did. A blackout candle was plonked in the cake, lit, blown out amidst cheering. I was not alone in eating the cake or drinking the bubbles! Since that first night I have enjoyed being a volunteer solicitor. The law has many blind gullies, and to be able to help people make informed choices by giving them quick, to the point legal advice is one of the most satisfying things I do as a lawyer - which is why I continue as a volunteer. Members of the LGBTI community face challenges, sometimes unique, and deserve a dedicated service to help them. In my own small way I am happy to be part of that.

Eliza Sullivan, Senior Legal Assistant and Evening Coordinator

I have been volunteering at the Service since the beginning of the year. As well as helping out on client evenings, I have taken part in a number of community events including IDAHOT and Pride Festivals at Brisbane and the Sunshine Coast. One of our focuses this year has been on strengthening ties with LGBTI youth in the community. As such, I took part in Queerosity festival, where we interacted with the young people at our lolly bag and dress-up stall. I have also really enjoyed helping to organise our fundraising trivia events. Our Queen Trivia event in April was a great success, and we are hoping to be even bigger and better at our second trivia event in November, Get Your Claus Out For Christmas Tree-via. Our participation in these events has really helped to further our community involvement and made people aware of our Service. I am greatly looking forward to continuing my roles in the Service.

Priyata Pal, Law Reform

I am a third-year law student who has been volunteering at the LGBTI Legal Service since mid-2015. The Service has offered me various opportunities that have allowed me to develop my skills, and foster both my professional and personal interests. The Service does invaluable work by addressing the lack of information around LGBTI issues in Queensland, and I have had the unique opportunity to research issues that I would not have otherwise encountered whilst studying my law degree.

Creating an educational resource about legal rights for transgender school children has been the highlight of my volunteering experience. Working on the trans kids resource has taught me how to present information in a way that is accessible to the public. I will have the chance to further develop this skill, as volunteers will be undertaking more in-depth research on the rights of LGBTI school children, and creating a more comprehensive educational resource in the near future.

The Service has also allowed me to undertake a leadership role, which consists of planning and creating an educational resource regarding LGBTI immigration. Pursuing this project means that I will be able to build connections with legal professionals and relevant organisations, such as the Refugee and Immigration Legal Service and the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre.

I have found that the people who volunteer at the Service are very supportive, and are passionate about their work; they plan various events throughout the year to promote equality, raise money, and facilitate community engagement with LGBTI issues.

My volunteering experience has even helped to broaden my possible career path; learning about the lack of legal protections for particularly vulnerable groups in society has fostered my interest in pursuing anti-discrimination law after graduation. My experience at the Service has been overwhelmingly positive, and I would wholeheartedly encourage other students to volunteer with us in the future.

Jess Davidson, Legal Assistant and Evening Coordinator

I began volunteering at LGBTI Legal Service at the beginning of the year. I have had the opportunity to be involved in legal assistant work as well as being at the forefront to meet and greet our clients on the Wednesday night advice sessions. Throughout the year I was able to help the team promote the Service and fundraise in a variety of events, which enables the Service to provide continual support to those in need within the LGBTI community.

While there were a number of issues pending our attention within the Service this year, I was involved in issues concerning LGBTI youth and trans kids. I was excited to a part of the trans kids seminars and meet some of our guest speakers. We also participated in Youth Week by setting up a stall at Queeriosity. We met some of the local youth via a dress up contest and were able to provide our contact details, in fun filled rainbow showbag, with some basic factsheets on common legal issues that youth may face. We are also working with Open Doors to incorporate an outreach program. The focus of this program will be to provide the youth with a legal liaison from the Service (known face), monthly, so that young people are less intimidated to come and see us at the Service for legal advice. By volunteering at the LGBTI Legal Service I feel I am really aiding those in a marginalised community to gain much-needed access to justice. While volunteering is rewarding and helps with my professional development, I have met some amazing people and built many friendships along the way also.



Some of our 2014 AGM attendees

Annexure

Treasurer's Report



Lesbian Gay Bisexual Trans Intersex Legal Service Inc.

Financial Statement

Presented for AGM October 23 2015

Treasurer's Report

The Treasurer presents this report for the financial year ending 30 June 2015, as required under the Associations Incorporation Act 1981, for Level 3 reporting.

The association keeps financial records in a way which properly records the association's income and expenditure and dealings with its assets and liabilities.

With assets less than \$20,000.00 and total revenue less than \$20,000.00 the Service does not require an auditor's report.

Operating results

The Service's surplus as of 30 June 2015 was \$336.61.

Total expenses as reported on the Profit and Loss Statement ending 30 June 2015 was \$1233.15. This was predominantly made up of fees for events LGBTI Legal Service volunteers attended.

The Service did not acquire any tangible assets and at 30 June 2015 did not have any outstanding accounts.

After balance date events

No matter has arisen since the end of the financial year which significantly affect the operations of the Service.

Signed by Treasurer: C. Downley

Date: 23 September 2015

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