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For immediate release



Media Release

Queensland Government Continues to Neglect Gay & Lesbian Seniors

The neglect of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) older people by the Queensland government continues with the release of *'Positively Ageless – Queensland Seniors Strategy 2010-20'* this week.

The strategy commits to a range of actions to improve the lives of Queensland's seniors, including specific actions for Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islanders, people from culturally & linguistically diverse backgrounds, seniors with a disability, men & women, seniors living in rural & remote areas and those who are homeless and unemployed.

Not a single action is listed to meet the specific needs of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender seniors.

This is despite the fact that LGBT seniors in Queensland have lived well over half of their lives being treated as criminal, diseased and without the legal protection and recognition taken for granted by other Queenslanders.

An LGBT senior who is today 70 years old would have been:

- 50 when homosexuality was decriminalised in Queensland
- 50 when homosexuality was removed from the World Health Organisation's International Classification of Diseases (ICD)
- 51 when discrimination on the basis of 'lawful sexual activity' became illegal in Queensland
- 62 when same-sex de-facto couples were legally recognised in Queensland
- 63 when discrimination on the basis of gender identity became illegal in Queensland
- 69 when same-sex de-facto couples were legally recognised federally in Australia

The effects of this exclusion, stigma and discrimination have life-long implications for LGBT seniors, including poorer health, less access to services and reduced social and financial capital.

Even today, LGBT people are not equal before the law. In Queensland there is no relationship registration scheme, no legal marriage, same-sex couples can not adopt children and there is an unequal age of consent.

"Many LGBT seniors were kicked to the ground by the federal government's changes to pension payments for same-sex couples which saw reduced pensions or the pension cut altogether. Now the Queensland government has just walked on by, offering no support to LGBT seniors in need."

"We are very disappointed that the Department of Communities has not taken this opportunity to include LGBT seniors and start to reverse the social exclusion and disadvantage faced by many in our community."

“QAHC has facilitated an LGBT Ageing Action Group for over three years, bringing together aged care providers, seniors groups, LGBT groups and LGBT seniors. The group has held social events for LGBT seniors, provided seminars on a range of issues, delivered training to aged care services, produced promotional resources and captured the stories and images of LGBT seniors. All of this work remains unfunded by government and is therefore limited in its reach.”

In its written submission to the development of the ‘Positively Ageless’ strategy, the Queensland Association for Healthy Communities (QAHC) called for:

- recognition of LGBT seniors in ageing policy & programs
- *buddy support program* – where LGBT people/volunteers are trained to provide low level social care to isolated LGBT seniors
- *mentoring program* – where LGBT seniors provide mentoring support to younger LGBT people
- *community leaders training* – provide training and support to LGBT seniors to become involved in volunteer activities and/or management committees of LGBT or mainstream organisations
- *advocacy program* – to provide a trusted ‘first port of call’ for LGBT seniors into the aged care/seniors sector (info & referral, may also include case management)
- *targeted promotions* – promotion of existing services through LGBT communication channels, including LGBT press and LGBT community groups/networks

Research conducted by QAHC among LGBT people found that:

- the highest concern about ageing for LGBT people is not having LGBT specific accommodation
- 43% of LGBT people have had a negative experience related to their sexuality or gender identity when accessing aged care or carer’s services
- 52% of LGBT people are concerned that their same sex partner will not be recognised by services
- over 75% of LGBT people do not believe there is adequate representation of older LGBT people in LGBT or mainstream media
- 66% of LGBT people have no or limited knowledge of aged care or carer’s services
- 64% of LGBT people want LGBT community organisations to provide information and referral to LGBT seniors and carers

For further information or to arrange an interview contact Paul Martin, General Manager on 07 3017 1791, 0407 376 540 or pmartin@qahc.org.au or visit our website www.qahc.org.au/seniors

The Queensland Association for Healthy Communities (formerly Queensland AIDS Council) is a community based organisation which promotes the health of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender Queenslanders.