



Special Commission of Inquiry into LGBTIQ hate crimes

Statement of Bruce Grant

15 November 2022

This statement made by me accurately sets out the evidence that I would be prepared, if necessary to give to the Special Commission of Inquiry into LGBTIQ hate crimes as a witness. The statement is true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Background

1. My name is Bruce Grant. I am an International Child Protection Adviser and Consultant. I provide advice to governments and international development agencies on how to protect children from violence, abuse and exploitation. I have a master's degree in international development.
2. From 1989 to 1991, I served as co-convener of the Gay and Lesbian Rights Lobby (**GLRL**) in NSW.
3. From 1991 to 1999, I was the Coordinator of the Lesbian and Gay Anti-Violence Project (the **AVP**).
4. I have also served in a range of voluntary roles within LGBTIQ community organisations, including:
 - as board member of Twenty-Ten, Lesbian and Gay Youth Service, which provides a broad range of specialised services for young people aged 12-25 including housing, mental health, counselling and social support (circa 1983-1986);
 - as board member of Gay Community Publishing, publisher of the *Sydney Star Observer*, a gay newspaper (circa 1988-1989);
 - as chair of the Outreach Committee of the 2002 Sydney Gay Games, which was an international LGBTQ+ and gay-friendly sports and cultural event (1999-2002).
5. From 1999 to 2002, I was Policy Coordinator for the NSW Department of Juvenile Justice.
6. In 2002 I left Australia to pursue a career in international development.
7. Between 2002 and 2019, I served as Child Protection Chief/Head of Section for the United Nations International Children's Fund (UNICEF) in several countries in the Pacific, in Sub-Saharan Africa, in the Middle East, and in East Asia.
8. I retired from the United Nations in 2019 and moved back to Australia later that year.

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9. In 2007 I was inducted into the GLRL Hall of Fame for my work on violence prevention and response.
10. This Statement primarily covers the period 1988 to 1999 when I was part of the community effort to prevent and respond to hate crimes against lesbians and gay men in NSW.

The Gay and Lesbian Rights Lobby

11. The NSW Gay and Lesbian Rights Lobby (GLRL) was established in 1988. It is the peak organisation for lesbian and gay rights in NSW. It provides referral and educative resources on gay and lesbian rights to the media, policy makers and the community. It works closely with bisexual, transgender and intersex organisations to advance the rights of LGBTIQ communities in NSW.
12. Its mission is to achieve legal equality and social justice for lesbians, gay men and their families. Its key achievements include anti-vilification laws (1993); equal age of consent legislation (2003); and removal of anti-gay and lesbian provisions from NSW legislation (1999 and 2002 and 2008). More recently GLRL was part of the national coalition advocating for marriage equality.
13. I was elected GLRL co-convenor in 1989 and served in this capacity for approximately two years. I had become involved in GLRL a year earlier when the group was formed.
14. Others involved at that time included Jane Clements and Gary Cox who were GLRL co-convenors from 1988-1989, and Carole Ruthchild who was co-convenor from 1989 to 1992.
15. During my involvement with GLRL, it was primarily focused on advocating for legal and policy reform so that LGBTIQ people would be able to have access to legal services and protection from violence. Some significant achievements during this time were:
 - the creation of a community legal service to provide legal advice and services to LGBTIQ people,
 - the development of the **Streetwatch** project to gather data on the nature and prevalence of violence against lesbians and gay men, and
 - the establishment of the Lesbian and Gay Anti-Violence Project (AVP) to mobilise a community response to hate crimes.

The Streetwatch studies

16. Between 1990 and 1994, the GLRL and the AVP conducted three studies (the Streetwatch series) which together provided a picture of the nature and prevalence of anti-LGBTIQ violence in NSW. The studies were primarily based on structured surveys where people could phone a hotline to report an incident or complete a written questionnaire.

17. The first report was *The Streetwatch Report: A Study into Violence Against Lesbians and Gay Men* (1990)¹ (SCOI.76806). This report was based on 67 incidents and primarily provided a snapshot of street-based and beat-based violence against gay men in inner-city Sydney.
18. The second report was *The Off Our Backs Report: A Study into Anti-Lesbian Violence* (1992)² (SCOI.76803). This report was based on 42 incidents and provided a snapshot of violence against lesbians in inner-city Sydney, much of which was ongoing and occurring in public places such as on the streets, workplaces and homes.
19. The third report in the series was *The Count and Counter Report: A Study into Hate Related Violence Against Lesbian and Gays* (1994)³ (SCOI.76804). This report was based on 184 incidents of violence recorded by the AVP in the eight months between November 1991-June 1992, and the twelve months between July 1992-June 1993. The report sought to identify trends in violence by comparing two data sets for 1991-1992 and 1992-1993. The report documented a range of anti-LGBTIQ incidents across NSW.

The Lesbian and Gay Anti-Violence Project (AVP)

20. The AVP was established in NSW in 1990, to mobilise the community response to anti-LGBTIQ violence. The genesis for the project was the urgent need for an accelerated and coordinated response to violence. It was modelled on similar initiatives overseas such as the Community United Against Violence (CUAV)⁴ project in San Francisco, which was established in 1979 and the New York City Anti-Violence Project,⁵ which was established in 1980.
21. The AVP was funded by the NSW Department of Health and the NSW Attorney General's Department (Crime Prevention Division) and through community donations. It was staffed by 3-5 paid employees, student interns and volunteers. It also received financial and in-kind support (office space) from the then South Sydney City Council.
22. The AVP evolved into one of Australia's foremost violence prevention and community safety programmes. It received four major awards including Joint First Winner of the 1994 Australian Heads of Government Violence Prevention Award, and the South Sydney Australia Day Award in 1997 for Marys' Place, a programme to raise awareness of sexual violence.
23. The AVP had four broad goals, focused on documentation, advocacy, behaviour change and research.

Documentation

24. To document incidents of violence, the AVP sought to mobilise the community to report violence, both to the AVP and to the police. Starting in 1990, the project operated a violence

¹ Gary Cox, 'The Streetwatch Report: A Study into Violence Against Lesbians and Gay Men' (Streetwatch Series Report No 1, Lesbian and Gay Anti-Violence Project, 1990) (SCOI.76806).

² Gay and Lesbian Rights Lobby Inc, 'The Off Our Backs Report: A Study into Anti-Lesbian Violence' (Streetwatch Series Report No 2, Lesbian and Gay Anti-Violence Project, September 1992) (SCOI.76803).

³ Gary Cox, 'The Count and Counter Report: A Study into Hate Related Violence Against Lesbians and Gays' (Streetwatch Series Report No 3, Lesbian and Gay Anti-Violence Project, January 1994) (SCOI.76804).

⁴ Community United Against Violence, *Community United Against Violence* <<https://www.cuav.org/>>.

⁵ NYC Anti-Violence Project, *Anti-Violence Project* (2022) <<https://avp.org/>>.

hotline where people could phone to make a report and to get information and support, including referral to appropriate response services.

25. This often involved AVP staff facilitating meetings between the survivor and the police, in instances where the survivor was reluctant to report to the police or in situations where the survivor had reported to the police but was unhappy with the response or unsure how the police would follow up the report.
26. The staff of the AVP worked closely with the Gay and Lesbian Client Consultant, a position established in response from advocacy by GLRL and located within the NSW Police in 1990, to resolve issues raised by victims of violence in their interactions with the police as well as on initiatives to improve relations between the community and police.
27. Although a cultural change started to occur within the NSW Police from about the 1990s, this change took some time to develop. Based on incidents reported to the AVP, around half of respondents did not report the violence to the police because they believed the police would not take the issue seriously. Of those that did report to the police, around half complained of poor service.⁶

Advocacy

28. Given this situation, the AVP advocated for the police to be trained on preventing and responding to anti-LGBTIQ violence, and for every police station to have at least one designated liaison officer trained on working with LGBTIQ people.
29. We also advocated for policy and legislative reform to address and prevent homophobia and violence. The most important achievement during this time was successful advocacy for an amendment to the *Anti-Discrimination Act 1977* to include a new ground of complaint of vilification based on perceived or actual homosexuality. This amendment was legislated in 1993 by the *Anti-Discrimination (Homosexual Vilification) Amendment Act*.

Behaviour change

30. To address the root causes of anti-LGBTIQ violence, the AVP ran large scale awareness campaigns to challenge behaviours and social norms that promoted homophobia and violence. One such campaign was ***Homophobia: What are You Scared of?*** The initiative was awarded a Certificate of Merit in the 1997 Australian Violence Prevention Awards. It also included a specific campaign focus to address violence against Indigenous LGBTIQ people.
31. To promote protective practices within the LGBTIQ communities, the AVP ran large scale community education campaigns targeting how to adopt protective behaviours such as reporting hate crimes.

Other initiatives

32. At the time of the establishment of the AVP in 1990, the situation in NSW was bleak. There was a sense that violence was increasing. The GLRL was reporting in early 1990 that: “...up to 20 to 30 lesbians and gay men may be being bashed each week! In the last 2 months, we have

⁶ SCOI.76806, p. 7.

experienced at least 2 murders, possibly more".⁷ There was a strong demand in the community for practical measures to deal with this violence such as self-defence workshops.

33. Hate was not only directed at individuals. It was also directed at organisations as this anonymous letter demonstrates:

*"This essay shall explore a creature which has to be referred to as the lowest form of scum on this planet. Words that come to mind on observing this creature include scum, filth, swine, vermin, faeces, maggot and rodent to name a few. This inferior creature has also been given names by the masses. Names such as sissies, pansies, fairies, poofters, queers, faggots and poofs. I shall refer to this lowly trash as faggots as it seems most appropriate. Faggots in the old days would burn in fires and these scum today should burn in battery acid... A national law should be enacted to shoot the faggot vermin on sight. (Anonymous hate mail, received by the Lesbian and Gay Anti-Violence Project in 1993)."*⁸

34. At the same time, policing in and around Oxford Street was inadequate. There was a general consensus in the community that there was a desperate need for evening patrols to act as a deterrent. This issue was an ongoing discussion point in community meetings with the police. Policing in and around Oxford Street was so inadequate that community members sought to fill this gap by establishing street patrols.
35. Separately from the AVP, a range of individuals spearheaded voluntary community responses. The whistle project, which included the safe place project; and the street patrols, were two such responses.
36. Whistles were promoted and distributed as a simple way for people to raise the alarm when under threat or witnessing someone being threatened or attacked.
37. Many businesses, particularly in inner-city Sydney, volunteered to be safe spaces where people could run to for protection. These businesses were provided with signs to promote this service.
38. Another group trained volunteers to patrol Oxford Street as a deterrent as well as to provide a visible point of contact. These volunteers provided assistance and information to victims and contacted the police if required.

Government response

39. Against this backdrop, the NSW government adopted a range of measures for the prevention and response to anti-LGBTIQ violence and there were concerted actions at the federal and local government levels as well. Some key measures included the following:
- The NSW Parliament enacted legislation to protect gay and lesbian people from vilification, and in particular language and actions inciting violence and hatred in the *Anti-Discrimination (Homosexual Vilification) Amendment Act 1993* (NSW).
 - The Crime Prevention Division of the NSW Attorney General's Department appointed a gay and lesbian policy officer in 1999 to coordinate violence prevention efforts across

⁷ Gay and Lesbian Rights Lobby, poster for 'Stop the Bashings Rally and March', March 1990.

⁸ Gary Cox, 'The Count and Counter Report: A Study into Hate Related Violence Against Lesbians and Gays' (Streetwatch Series Report No 3, Lesbian and Gay Anti-Violence Project, January 1994), p. 4 (SCOI.76804).

a range of government agencies and to work with the community on the development of violence prevention initiatives.

- The NSW Police appointed its first full time Client Consultant Gay Liaison Officer (discussed above) in 1990 and began a process of progressively rolling out the Gay and Lesbian Liaison Officers programme, in which appropriate police officers were designated as community liaison officers.
- At the local government level, South Sydney Council appointed its first gay and lesbian liaison officer in 2000, which was a full-time policy officer post to coordinate violence prevention efforts across the council and in collaboration with the community sector.
- At the federal level, the government contributed funding to prevention programmes, including the Lesbian Loves Rights⁹ campaign, which was designed to promote the rights of lesbians and to promote protective behaviours.
- In the 1990s, the Australian Institute of Criminology and other research and policy think tanks convened conferences and meetings and produced discussion papers and research on anti LGBTIQ violence.

Experiences of gay and lesbian people in the late 1980s and the 1990s

40. Until the 1980s, anti-LGBTIQ violence was to a large extent an unrecognized phenomenon – unrecognised, that is, other than by those experiencing it. Although violence was commonplace, it was not seen as warranting a response by federal or state governments. This was not dissimilar to violence against women which was, and still is, commonplace but was not considered a matter requiring concerted action by governments until 1994 when the first National Strategy on Violence Against Women was initiated.¹⁰
41. At the time of the **Streetwatch** project in 1988/1989, ‘poofter bashing’ was considered a national pastime. Based on current media reports,¹¹ it is still happening today.
42. While the situation has significantly improved, there is still no NSW or national study on the nature, cause, prevalence and impact of homophobia and transphobia, much less coordinated efforts by national and state governments and territories to prevent it. Such a study, and such responses, were among the main recommendations of the Streetwatch Report. This remains unfinished business.
43. This Special Commission of Inquiry into LGBTIQ Hate Crimes is an essential effort by the State of NSW to understand a critically important aspect of hate violence and in particular policing and murders. Its investigation into unsolved suspected hate crime deaths of LGBTIQ people (or people who were presumed to be LGBTIQ) in NSW between 1970 and 2010 will provide valuable

⁹ Lesbian and Gay Anti-Violence Project, Lesbian Love Rights Campaign, 1994 (SCOI.77268).

¹⁰ Anita Morris and Emma Toone, ‘Extending the Reach: A Timely and Tailored Approach to Children Experiencing Family Violence’ (2011) 24 *Parity*, 37 <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/301621822_Extending_the_reach_a_timely_and_tailored_approach_to_children_experiencing_family_violence>.

¹¹ Savannah Meacha, ‘They Wanted to Kill Me: Sydney Man Believes He Was Victim of Hate Crime Assault’ *9 News* (25 August 2022) <<https://www.9news.com.au/national/sydney-man-alleged-assault-universal-nightclub-oxford-street/ab69d1a4-18c2-4839-998e-063e8d8af840>>.

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new knowledge about these crimes, and perhaps also about the cultural and social norms that enabled them. Most importantly, it will bring some justice to the victims and their families and some sense of closure.

Concluding remarks

44. Change is possible when there is consensus for action, with predictable and sustainable financial investments in that action.
45. Eliminating hate related violence against LGBTIQ people, as well as racial violence and gender-based violence, is totally achievable. Violence is a human action, which means that an alternative human action to violence is possible, which in turn means that prevention is possible.
46. However, without a full-scale inquiry into the nature and prevalence of hate crimes against people because of their actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity, society's efforts to eliminate it will remain elusive.

Signature:**Name:**

Bruce Grant

Date:

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