

*'You shouldn't have to hide to be safe'*

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**A Report on Homophobic Hostilities and Violence Against  
Gay Men and Lesbians In New South Wales**

December 2003

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**Attorney General's**  
department of nsw

**urbis**  
keys young

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Against Gay Men and Lesbians in New South Wales*



**Attorney General's**  
department of nsw



NSW Department of  
Community Services



New South Wales  
Department for Women

**NSW HEALTH**  
Working as a Team



Works for me



New South Wales Department of  
Aboriginal Affairs

NSW Ombudsman

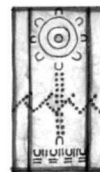
**acon**  
community, health and action

NSW DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING

lesbian  
& gay  
**anti-violence**  
project

**TWENTY 10**  
gay+lesbian youth support

**Gay & Lesbian  
Rights Lobby**



**Legal Aid**  
NEW SOUTH WALES

*NSW Commission for Children & Young People, NSW Aboriginal Justice Advisory Council,  
NSW Department of Education & Training, NSW Department of Local Government,  
NSW Department of Ageing, Disability & Home Care, NSW Anti-Discrimination Board,  
City of Sydney Council, The Cabinet Office, Premier's Department*

Prepared for the **NSW Attorney General's Department - Crime Prevention Division**

On behalf of the Network of Government Agencies (NOGA): Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual & Transgender Issues

Published by the NSW Attorney General's Department, December 2003

Copies of this report are available on [www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/cpd](http://www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/cpd)

ISBN: 0 7347 2815 8

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## *acknowledgements*

Firstly, and most importantly, we would like to acknowledge and thank all the participants in the survey and focus groups for sharing their experiences and knowledge with us. Your participation has proved invaluable in helping us better understand the nature of homophobic violence in New South Wales and to develop appropriate responses.

For guidance and advice throughout the project, our thanks to Committee members:

Steven Drew, Jackie Braw and David Toolan (NSW Attorney General's Department - Crime Prevention Division),  
 Max Saxby (NSW Department of Corrective Services),  
 Brendan Delahunty (NSW Ombudsman),  
 Brad Gray (Lesbian and Gay Anti-Violence Project – AIDS Council of NSW),  
 Anthony Schembri (Gay and Lesbian Rights Lobby),  
 Loretta Allen-Weinstein (NSW Department of Juvenile Justice), and  
 Deb Stow and Dace Abolins (NSW Department of Community Services).

Without the Network of Government Agencies: Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Issues (NOGA), members of which provided financial and in-kind support, this project would not have been possible.

The NSW Attorney General's Department, as the lead agency for the NOGA, was the largest contributor towards the research project. Thank you to all NOGA members who contributed financial and in-kind support:

NSW Commission for Children and Young People,  
 NSW Department of Community Services,  
 NSW Department of Corrective Services,  
 NSW Department of Juvenile Justice,  
 NSW Department for Women,  
 NSW Health, and  
 South Sydney City Council.

Other NOGA agencies contributed in-kind support. Thank you:

NSW Police, NSW Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care, NSW Department of Aboriginal Affairs, NSW Department of Education and Training, NSW Ombudsman, NSW Department of Housing, NSW Department of Local Government, City of Sydney Council, Legal Aid NSW, NSW Anti-Discrimination Board, Premier's Department and The Cabinet Office.

Several key gay and lesbian community organisations that regularly participated in the NOGA were major supporters of the NOGA research project. For this we thank:

The Gay and Lesbian Rights Lobby, ACON, including the Lesbian and Gay Anti-Violence Project and Twenty10 Gay and Lesbian Youth and Family Support.

Appreciation and thanks to all the agencies that assisted with promotion and distribution of the survey. A list of these organisations and groups is provided at Appendix D.

The focus groups would not have been possible had it not been for the time, energy and support of the staff and volunteers of agencies assisting with recruitment and organisation of the groups and provision of venues. Our thanks go to:

ACON staff and social support groups, Twenty10 Gay and Lesbian Youth and Family Support, Bankstown Health Service, Aboriginal Justice Advisory Council and the NSW Attorney General's Department - Crime Prevention Division (Policy Officer, Gay and Lesbian Liaison).



## *foreword*

The social problem of hate related violence towards gay men and lesbians has been formally recognised by Governments in New South Wales for some 20 years. A number of data collection exercises since 1979 suggests that lesbians and gay men are significantly more likely to encounter abuse and violence compared to heterosexual men and women. NSW Governments have responded with community awareness raising and education campaigns, support programs for victims of violence and specific initiatives to inform members of the gay and lesbian community about dealing with abuse and violence.

In 1995, NSW Police released *Out of the Blue* – a report on a survey of 297 lesbians and gay men at a Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras Fair Day. The results were alarming: gay men and lesbians were between four and six times more likely to be assaulted in a 12 month period than other Sydney men and women. Most respondents in this study felt that homophobia was the motive behind the attack.

We have not seen a large scale research project of this kind for nearly a decade. Much has changed during this time such as our community's growing acceptance of diversity in relationships and family types, safety measures to prevent violence, Police services to monitor and control crime. For example, both the Police Gay and Lesbian Liaison program and the community based Lesbian and Gay Anti-Violence Project have been operational since 1990, we now have legal recognition of same sex relationships in most areas of the law and there is an equal age of consent for gay men.

I am pleased to introduce *'You shouldn't have to hide to be safe'* - A Report on Homophobic Hostilities and Violence against Gay Men and Lesbians in NSW. This report is provocative and challenging, reflecting the courage and passion of all those who participated. Many individuals and groups were involved in this research project, and most volunteered their time to contribute to this collaborative endeavour. I would like to personally thank all who took the time to complete the survey and those who shared their experiences and knowledge with us in the focus groups.

The descriptions of homophobic abuse and violence provided by the focus groups suggest a depth and complexity that has not, until now, been well documented. For instance, the 'trade-off' between openness and safety facing many lesbians and gay men underlies many decisions made in daily living – decisions that are often taken for granted by other members of the community such as where we live, which school to send our children to, what we wear out at night. Much of this information is new and potentially groundbreaking, so we decided to begin the report with Stage 2 results: Focus group research.

Violence, in any form, perpetrated against any individual or group has no place in our community. There is no acceptable motivation for violence. I trust that all relevant Government agencies will take the information in this report as a matter of priority to their planning and policy development meetings to inform their work in this area.



Bob Debus, Attorney General of NSW





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## *executive summary*

### **Introduction**

This research project was conducted in partnership with over 20 New South Wales Government agencies, local government and lesbian and gay community organisations.

A Research Steering Committee comprising members from the Network of Government Agencies: Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Issues (NOGA) and gay and lesbian community organisations provided overall guidance and direction throughout the project.

This research is the first major study of its kind since NSW Police conducted *Out of the Blue* in 1994/95.

### **Nature of this study**

This report describes a postal and internet survey on homophobic abuse and violence that was conducted across NSW between March and early June 2003. Six hundred people responded to the survey (approximately equal numbers by post and via the internet).

The study also involved eight focus group discussions with gay men and lesbians from a range of different backgrounds: Indigenous gay men and lesbians, lesbian and gay parents, young gay men and lesbians, mature age gay men and lesbians, gay men and lesbians of Middle-Eastern background, Asian gay men, gay men in western Sydney.

### **Characteristics of the survey respondents**

Half the respondents were gay men, 42% were lesbians, and 6% were bisexual. The great majority (84%) were aged in their 20s, 30s and 40s.

Just on half the respondents lived in inner Sydney and another 14% elsewhere in Sydney; 19% lived in regions close to Sydney, such as the Hunter and the Illawarra, and 16% in other parts of NSW. Lesbians outnumbered gay men among the respondents who lived outside Sydney.

Three-quarters of the respondents were in employment and 11% were students. Sixty per cent were university educated (67% of lesbians, 56% of the gay men).

### **Findings: The nature and incidence of homophobic abuse**

More than half (56%) of the respondents reported having experienced one or more forms of homophobic abuse, harassment or violence in the past 12 months. Eighty-five per cent had at some time experienced such abuse, harassment or violence.

The three types of abuse most commonly experienced, both in the past year and ever, were verbal abuse; harassment such as spitting, offensive gestures, being followed etc; and threatened or attempted physical attack/assault. Other respondents reported experiencing property damage/vandalism/theft; written threats or abuse/hate mail; physical attack with or without a weapon; and sexual assault.

Just under half of the lesbian respondents, and 61% of gay men, reported abuse in the past year. Among bisexual respondents (a relatively small sample), 87% reported having at some time experienced homophobic abuse or violence, while 68% said they had experienced this in the past year.

A relatively high incidence of various types of abuse in the past year was reported by the youngest respondents (ages 16-19). Overall, the incidence of abuse in the past year tended to be higher than average among people living in inner Sydney.

Among those who had experienced abuse, harassment or violence in the past year, around three-quarters reported experiencing two or more such incidents.

Respondents who had experienced abuse in the past year provided information about their most recent experience, including the following:

- the most common locations of abuse/harassment/violence were at or near gay/lesbian venues, at/near home, at/near work or place of study, or elsewhere in the street;
- 8% of those experiencing abuse in the past year had suffered a physical injury in the most recent incident.

As for the perpetrators of harassment or violence in the past year:

- most incidents involved two or more perpetrators;
- in three out of four cases the perpetrators were unknown to the respondents; however 14% of respondents knew the perpetrator(s) personally, and 8% knew them by sight or knew where they were from;
- more lesbians than gay men knew the perpetrator(s), and more people outside Sydney than in Sydney knew the perpetrator(s).

Sixty-nine per cent of survey respondents felt vulnerable to violence or harassment from strangers (74% in inner Sydney, 63% outside Sydney). Additionally, 19% felt vulnerable to violence or harassment from people they knew.

## Use of services

Among those experiencing abuse or violence in the past year, 13% had reported the most recent incident to the Police, 7% had consulted a counsellor/psychologist/social worker about it, and smaller numbers had sought help from various other agencies. Respondents were much more likely to have sought such assistance if they suffered physical injury – and also if they knew the perpetrator(s). The percentage of respondents who had not sought any assistance from such agencies was particularly high among the youngest respondents (ages 16-19).

Most of the respondents who had gone to an official or professional service provider of this kind had found it at least reasonably supportive or co-operative.

Just on 80% of the survey respondents said they would feel confident about reporting abuse to the Police if they thought this was warranted. The focus groups indicated that most people would prefer to deal with a Police Gay and Lesbian Liaison Officer – though the numbers of GLLOs are limited.



## Effects of homophobic abuse

Experience and concerns relating to homophobic abuse and violence have far-reaching effects on the way lesbians and gay men live. Among the survey respondents, for example, around three-quarters reported that concerns about abuse led them to modify their behaviour in various ways. Many gay men and lesbians are – realistically – concerned about the prospect of abuse, harassment or violence, and this can affect their choices and decision-making in numerous ways, large and small – from choice of clothing to decisions about careers and where to live.

Half of the survey respondents reported that experience or concerns relating to abuse made them feel worried, stressed or anxious. Other impacts of homophobic abuse included depression, hiding or feeling bad about one's sexuality, negative effects on friendships and relationships, and being discouraged from going out or socialising.

In terms of age, most of these adverse impacts were most frequently reported by the youngest respondents (16-19 years).

## Other matters

The focus group discussions spelled out similarities and differences in the experience of various groups of gay men and lesbians. Asian gay men and Indigenous gay men and lesbians, for example, spoke about interconnecting patterns of homophobic and racist abuse – including racism encountered within the gay and lesbian communities. Lesbians and gay men of Middle-Eastern background indicated that for them the most severe experiences of homophobic abuse, harassment and violence tended to come from within their own families or communities – with lesbians facing especially difficult situations.

Among the survey respondents, some 80% said that they were 'pretty open' about their sexuality, however, over half took the view that gay men and lesbians were generally safer if they hid their sexual orientation.

## Conclusions

Gay men and lesbians in NSW continue to experience high levels of homophobic abuse, harassment or violence. The percentage of the current survey respondents who had experienced some form of homophobic abuse in the past year (56%) was almost exactly the same as was found in the *Out of the Blue* survey in 1994/95.

The fact that nearly 80% of respondents said that they would be prepared to report homophobic abuse or violence to the Police indicates that over time there has been a significant improvement in the likelihood of gay men and lesbians seeking Police assistance; however, there remain various reasons why some may hesitate to go to the Police. These include fears of possibly insensitive or homophobic Police responses; a belief that if the perpetrator is unknown there is little the Police can do; concern about getting caught up in an investigation process that could itself be unpleasant or distressing; fears by Indigenous people that the Police may see them as the guilty rather than the injured party; and fear that in involving the Police you may risk 'outing' yourself to your family or others.

Both the survey and the focus group research highlighted the 'trade-offs' that lesbians and gay men may face between openness and safety. In general those who took part in the research felt likely to be at greater risk of abuse, harassment or violence if they were frank and open about their sexuality; concealment and denial however, carried their own negative consequences.

The focus group participants tended to see young gay men and lesbians as especially vulnerable to homophobic abuse of various kinds, and the survey results confirmed that such abuse was a particularly significant issue for young people. Young gay men and lesbians (ages 16-19) who took part in the survey reported relatively high levels of various forms of abuse, and also a high incidence of negative impacts, such as anxiety or withdrawal. Young people also reported relatively little use of government or non-government support services, including the Police.

Many of the focus group participants referred to the key importance of schools in providing information about sexuality and homophobia, and in addressing the issue of homophobic abuse. In part this was because the school was itself the site of a lot of homophobic behaviour, but it also reflected the fact that for many young gays and lesbians the school was the place where they had the best chance of getting clear and accurate information.

## The way forward

The complex forms of hate related abuse and violence experienced by gay men and lesbians from Indigenous and culturally diverse backgrounds, in part based on homophobia but also racially motivated, suggest that responses may need to be specifically tailored to 'subgroups' within the broader gay and lesbian community. Gender and age are also important factors at play in the experience and response to homophobic abuse. Over the last 20 years or so, the majority of Government funded programs addressing homophobic violence have targeted or represented the 'gay and lesbian community' in the broader sense. This research suggests that more specific targeting of programs may be required.

Similarly, strategies may need to be targeted towards specific situations of abuse and violence, such as the sites of violence. Schools were highlighted by all focus groups as critical areas of concern – because they appear to be key sites of homophobic abuse and violence and because they provide some of the best opportunities for information and education to young people about diverse sexualities, stereotyping, discrimination and homophobia.

The success of early intervention strategies in the area of crime prevention is well documented. Early intervention strategies to prevent the development of abusive and violent behaviours directed against lesbians and gay men form the basis of much of the work that has been undertaken to date such as the anti-homophobia education campaigns conducted by the Lesbian and Gay Anti-Violence Project. The research suggests that this approach, in principle, should be maintained. However, evaluative research to determine which features of these programs are more likely to impact on attitudes and behaviours would inform the future development of effective early intervention strategies.

The research suggests that young people are particularly vulnerable to the impact of homophobic abuse and violence, and less likely to seek help. Government funded programs may need to pay particular attention to supporting young people who are victimised, or who live in fear of abuse and violence.

The results suggest that some of our efforts over the last decade in response to homophobic violence have been working – eight out of ten surveyed felt confident to report incidents to the Police and many participants in the survey and focus groups acknowledged their rights in relation to anti-discrimination laws and to access services, both mainstream and gay and lesbian community based. Ongoing information and education might be considered to support these successes by ensuring that lesbians and gay men are aware of their legislative rights and encouraged to access legal, justice, health and related services.

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# 1 Introduction

The Crime Prevention Division (CPD) of the New South Wales Attorney General's Department (AGD), on behalf of the Network of Government Agencies: Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Issues (NOGA) commissioned a research project examining violence and homophobic hostilities against gay men and lesbians across New South Wales. The project was conducted in partnership with a range of key NSW Government agencies (listed in the Acknowledgements section of this report), local government and lesbian and gay community organisations such as the Gay and Lesbian Rights Lobby and the Lesbian and Gay Anti-Violence Project.

This report describes the conduct of the research and presents qualitative and quantitative findings. Section 2 briefly summarises the research methodology (a more detailed description is provided at Appendix A). Section 3 discusses the focus group research, and sections 4-8 present the main survey findings; section 9 draws some comparisons between the results of this survey and other related research, including the most relevant previous survey conducted in NSW. Section 10 draws together the main project findings and conclusions.

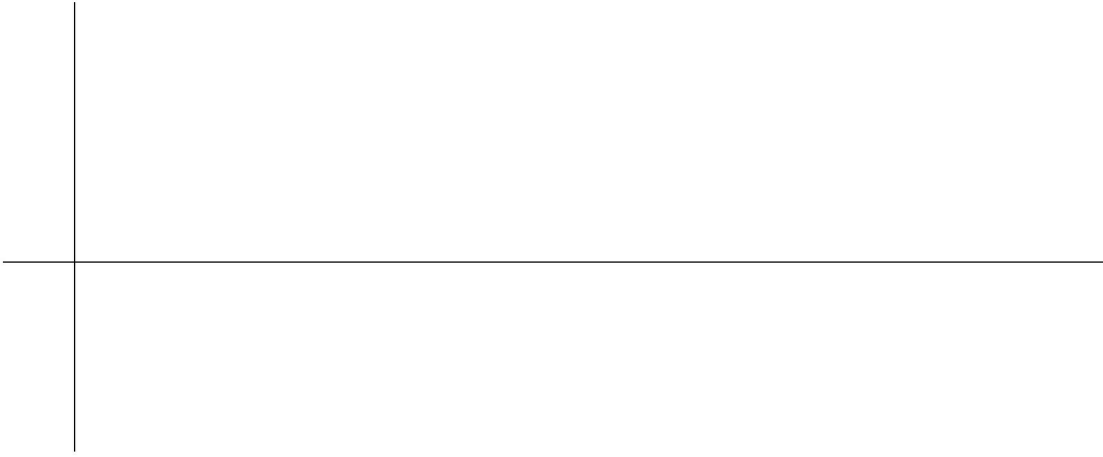
The Appendices provide the following material:

Appendix A: Methodology

Appendix B: Survey questionnaire

Appendix C: Focus group discussion outline

Appendix D: Organisations which provided assistance with survey distribution.



## 2 Summary of methodology

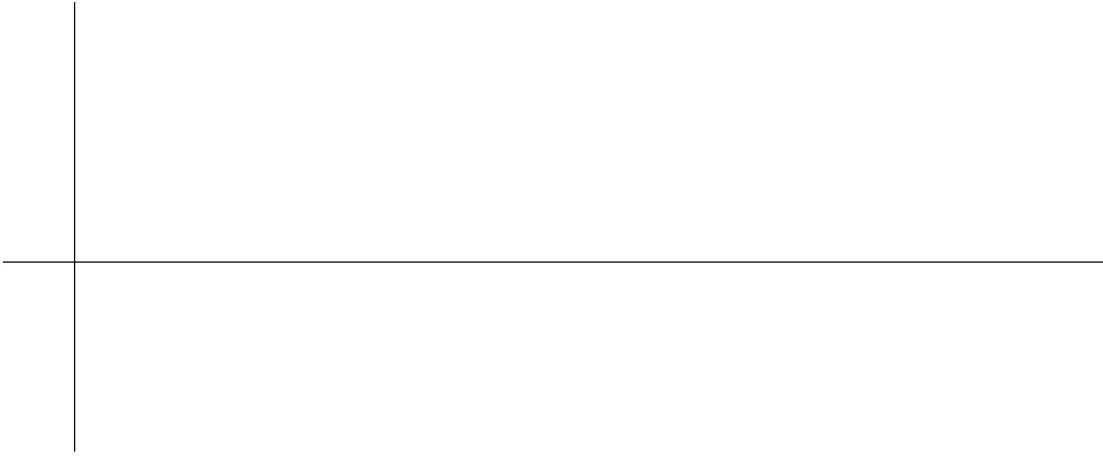
The research brief was developed in consultation with the Network of Government Agencies: GLBT Issues (NOGA), convened by the CPD. The NOGA – which was established in 2001 – commissioned this research to provide accurate and up to date information on homophobic violence throughout NSW to inform policy and practice in this area.

A Research Steering Committee comprising members from the NOGA and the gay and lesbian community provided guidance and direction for the study from the initial research brief through to reporting and publication of data. (Members of the Steering Committee are also listed in the Acknowledgements section of this report.)

The project involved the following stages:

- *Stage 1:* meeting with the Steering Committee (10 December 2002)
- *Stage 2:* survey research (January-June 2003). A survey questionnaire was developed, and distributed through a variety of mechanisms:
  - media advertising and promotion, including advertisements (and in some cases editorial) in the gay and lesbian media and two regional mainstream newspapers, and several radio interviews
  - promotion and distribution through a wide range of government and community-based organisations which connect with gay men and lesbians, as well as mainstream organisations
  - establishment of a web-site, including an on-line version of the survey.
  - A total of 600 eligible survey responses were received.
- *Stage 3:* conduct of eight focus groups to shed further light on a number of issues, and to obtain more detailed information from some subgroups of the gay and lesbian population which were not represented in large numbers in the survey (August 2003). These eight groups were as follows:
  - Indigenous gay men
  - Indigenous lesbians
  - lesbian and gay parents
  - young gay men and lesbians
  - mature age gay men and lesbians (aged over 50)
  - gay men and lesbians of Middle-Eastern background
  - gay men of Asian background
  - gay men in western Sydney (not university-educated, not working in professional or managerial etc positions).
- Participants in these groups were recruited through a variety of contacts, but mostly through relevant community organisations or social support groups.
- *Stage 4:* reporting.

Further details on conduct of the study are provided in Appendix A to this report.



## 3 Focus group research

This section summarises a total of eight focus group discussions conducted with: Indigenous gay men and lesbians, lesbian and gay parents, young gays and lesbians, mature aged lesbians and gay men, Asian gay men, lesbians and gay men of Middle Eastern background and gay men in Western Sydney. This work followed the conduct of the survey research and provided an opportunity, among other things, to discuss issues with various groups which were not represented in large numbers in the survey.

Reports on each focus group are set out in sections 3.1 to 3.8. Section 3.9 considers a number of common themes that emerged.

### 3.1 Group 1: Indigenous gay men

#### 3.1.1 Introduction

This group involved 12 Indigenous men from various parts of Sydney, and two from country areas.

#### 3.1.2 Experience of types of abuse

People in this group took the view that gay men were certainly more vulnerable than heterosexual men to abuse and violence. Various forms of abuse to which they referred included insults shouted from people in cars, taunts on the street, being beaten up, and sexual abuse. They suggested that 'obvious' gay men were particularly vulnerable; these were likely to be perceived as 'weaker' and thus 'instant prey'.

Abuse could be perpetrated both by strangers and by people you knew. Attacks by people you knew were thought to be especially likely in country towns or communities.

Within Indigenous families or communities, it was said, attitudes to gay men varied a lot from person to person. Members of the immediate family might be supportive, but not people in the extended family or larger community. Some people (for example, many older women) were very accepting, but others were hostile and abusive.

Participants observed that it was sometimes the *gay* son or brother in the family who 'made good' in the sense of completing school, possibly going on to further study, and getting a good job. He was therefore a resource to the family – someone who could be relied on, who made a responsible babysitter, who became something of a 'right hand man' to the mother who held the family together.

Attitudes also varied from one Indigenous group or community to another. Some men in the group said that they came from communities where there was little or no homophobia; some commented that the most hostile attitudes and treatment tended to be found in heavily Christianised Aboriginal communities.

One man from western NSW said that in the communities that he knew, gay men had to be strong to survive. Low self-esteem was a common problem, and suicide not uncommon.

The point was made that the broader Indigenous community has had *little information or education* about homophobia and homophobic abuse.

Like the Indigenous lesbians in Group 2 (see section 3.2), these men referred to *racist* abuse and discrimination that they had experienced within the gay/lesbian community – especially at commercial venues. They said that security staff, for example, sometimes displayed negative attitudes, and were inclined to stereotype black men as drunks or troublemakers, and to assume that they were responsible for instigating any violence that might occur. One light-skinned man commented that he could be ‘legless’ and still get served in a bar, while his darker-skinned friends were ignored.

Participants noted that some white gay men tended to treat Indigenous gay men as second-class citizens – for example treating them as stupid or uneducated, or thinking they could ‘buy’ them with a drink<sup>1</sup>. Being black and gay thus exposed you to a ‘double whammy’ of prejudice and abuse. Being black, gay and HIV-positive was a ‘triple whammy’.

As in a number of other groups, several people made comments to the effect that Oxford Street is no longer a safe or comfortable area for gay men and lesbians; the crowd there is now very mixed, they said, and this makes for quite a volatile situation.

### **3.1.3 Effects of abuse**

Participants described a range of reactions to homophobic abuse and harassment. To some extent it seemed that Indigenous men were inured to racism and/or homophobia from strangers – such as taxi drivers or, as mentioned above, venue security staff or bartenders.

Several people in this group (as in other groups) said that *avoidance* was the best strategy for minimising abuse. One man, however, said that as a child he learned he had to be able to fight to defend himself; some others agreed that Aboriginal men did need to be prepared to cope with violence, from either Indigenous or non-Indigenous attackers<sup>2</sup>.

It appeared that, if anything, abuse or violence from other Indigenous people might have the more damaging consequences. Within an Indigenous community, as noted above, depression, isolation and even suicide were possible effects.

### **3.1.4 Services and agencies**

The possibility of these gay men seeking assistance from the Police was complicated by their broader experience of Police/Indigenous relations. They said that racist attitudes among Police officers were still common. It was unlikely, for example, that an Aboriginal man would want to involve the Police in the event of domestic violence perpetrated by a white partner, because the Aboriginal man would assume that *he* was the one who might get ‘hailed off’ by the Police. One man referred to a situation where the Police had asked him to be a witness in a court case, and then run a criminal records check on him.

*‘The Police have broken my trust’.*

More generally, several people said that for them to go to the Police about a homophobic incident would be a waste of time:

*‘You wouldn’t get anywhere’.*

*‘They don’t do nothing’.*

<sup>1</sup> Some of the participants noted that *Asian* men were also sometimes treated badly at gay venues.

<sup>2</sup> If the Police broke up a fight, however, it was probably the Aboriginal man who would get charged – see section 4 below.



Among other things, it was said, Police do not receive adequate cultural awareness training.

There were people in the group, however, who had some positive experience of contact with a Police Gay and Lesbian Liaison Officer. One man commented that GLOs were not easy to find: there did not seem to be many of them around.

One participant who worked for a government department said that he felt knowledgeable and confident about his rights, and would certainly go to the Police if he felt the circumstances justified this.

*Medical treatment*, it was said, could also be a problem for Indigenous gay men. Workers at the Aboriginal Medical Service (AMS), for example, were sometimes homophobic, and could be ignorant or insensitive about issues such as HIV. There were also significant risks relating to privacy and confidentiality within the AMS: you could find that personal information about you was circulating on 'the Koori grapevine'. This was a particular problem in country areas, some said.

Mainstream clinics and hospitals, on the other hand, were likely to have good facilities, but possibly little cultural awareness. For example, said one participant, Aboriginal people are likely to have 'heaps of visitors' if they are in hospital; a gay man, in particular, may have lots of gay friends visit. The hospital may be unimpressed and try to turn people away: 'Are you family?'

Public hospitals and the like did not always treat sexual health issues sensitively. One participant commented that hospitals were sometimes disrespectful in relation to sexuality and gender issues. For example he knew of an Aboriginal 'sistergirl' who was barred from wearing women's clothes in hospital.

Then again, an Aboriginal man presenting at Casualty with HIV-related dementia might be assumed to be drunk.

*'I've seen our mob thrown out of hospital.'*

Participants saw a need to educate young nurses and doctors better about both race and sexuality issues.

### **3.1.5 Other issues**

One participant in the group made the point that young Indigenous gay men may face extremely difficult identity issues as they are growing up. A boy may, for example, have one Aboriginal and one non-Aboriginal parent – possibly a step-parent; adding homosexuality into this mix could make it 'just too hard'. As a gay black teenager at school, said one man:

*'I got flogged by both the white kids and the black kids.'*

The participants thus placed heavy emphasis on the key role that *schools* could play in countering homophobia and supporting young people through the sorts of personal and identity problems referred to above. 'It needs to start at school'.

Health and sex education programs designed for Aboriginal groups, it was said, do not adequately address homophobia.

## 3.2 Group 2: Indigenous lesbians

### 3.2.1 Introduction

The four participants in this group were Indigenous women who identified as lesbian, gay or 'happy'. Issues of race and racism, and how these relate to sexuality and homophobia, were raised in the discussion.

### 3.2.2 Experiences of types of abuse

There was a consensus among participants in this group that racism is the most serious and pervasive form of prejudice that they face in their daily lives. All said that they have experienced racism from the broader gay and lesbian community. Lesbian bars were identified as particular sites where the women feel uncomfortable. Several people stated that they tend to feel more 'relaxed' and 'normal' in straight venues where there are lots of different types of people.

*'I don't go because I feel they don't like black people.'*

*'For me, it's about going to places where I feel comfortable. Lots of lesbian subcultures – where do I fit in?'*

Most participants felt that the risk of homophobic hostility was an issue for them personally in addition to the homophobic *discrimination* that several people said they had experienced in the workplace. In general, this was because homophobic hostility poses a threat to their sense of personal safety. However, it was suggested by several participants that this sense of vulnerability very much depends on the context. For example, some areas are safe, others are not; some groups of people are safe, others are not. Every environment and situation is assessed to determine whether it is safe to come out or to be visible as a black lesbian.

All the participants stated that they had experienced some form of homophobic verbal abuse, either from strangers on the street or from acquaintances. One woman reported an overt incident of homophobic hostility: this happened when a white man physically threatened her and her girlfriend in an inner-suburban car park one night. Another woman in the group had witnessed a heterosexual Indigenous woman in her community make homophobic comments about a women's sporting team, screaming out 'black dyke'. Another noted that her niece had experienced schoolyard taunts, leading to fights, over the fact that she (the aunt) was a lesbian.

Most participants felt that their sexuality was accepted within their immediate family; they did not feel that homophobic abuse or hostility in this context was an issue for them personally. However, one participant suggested that her *extended* family might be less accepting.

Most participants said there was little difference between their experiences of homophobia from the broader white or black communities. Each community was capable of being homophobic, and this included both men and women. One participant did suggest, however, that the black community can be more accepting of *gay men* than it is of lesbians. Another participant, who had been a sex worker for some time, identified this as a particularly vulnerable occupation, where racism and sexism reinforce each other:

*'If you're black, you're a slut anyhow.'*

Most participants indicated that they feel more vulnerable when they go to unfamiliar areas. The area might be safe, or it might not be; there is no way of knowing. Whilst country towns were highlighted by some of the women as unsafe places, others felt safe in such environments if they had family and friends there. In contrast, all regarded the western areas of Sydney as unsafe. In addition, Queensland and Western Australia were both

referred to by some of the women as regions where the threat of racism and homophobia felt higher. There were mixed perceptions in the group about whether the Mardi Gras Parade was or was not a safe place.

The participants stated that the combination of being black and lesbian makes them less safe than most other women. It is not always possible to separate out issues of race from those of sexuality or gender; each of these aspects of the women's lives interacts with and shapes the others. For example, a hostile comment on the street might well reflect a combination of racism and homophobia.

Some in the group suggested that having to deal with these various forms of prejudice (racism, sexism and homophobia) makes them more attuned to the possibility of hostility and violence than other people. One participant put it like this:

*'You're black anyway and you're aware of racism. You're a lesbian and you're black. Your antenna's twice as long. You pick up on it really fast. Faster than other people do. You're more attuned to it than white people.'*

This heightened awareness was interpreted as an important survival skill that allows the women to quickly 'get the feel of a place' and to assess how safe it is. They choose not to return to places that do not feel safe. In other words, these skills can be helpful in avoiding racist, homophobic or sexist abuse.

*'It's a Koori thing. We know when we're generally wanted and when we're not.'*

### **3.2.3 Effects of abuse**

Talking about both homophobic discrimination and hostility, some participants stated that such experiences have eroded their sense of trust in other people and have led them to exercise more caution in disclosing their sexuality to others, in choosing where to spend their leisure time, where to live, and so on. An experience of discrimination or hostility was also said to undermine your sense of confidence. For example, the participant who reported being attacked in the Newtown carpark now avoids going near that area and no longer feels that Newtown is a safe place. Whilst most participants said that they felt generally safe in the areas where they live, each talked about the various things that she did to minimise the risk of abuse, such as avoiding streets and areas that feel unsafe.

*'We're all consciously aware of the danger. We avoid danger.'*

Some members of the group pointed out that homophobia from members of the black community could hurt more than homophobia that came from the white community:

*'It's your own mob. That's what really hurts.'*

One positive effect of living with the possibility of discrimination and hostility was identified by some participants during the course of the discussion: it makes Koori women and Koori lesbians stronger.

*'You've got to be tough or die. As a black woman, you've got no choice. If you don't toughen up, you die.'*

### **3.2.4 Services and agencies**

All the participants said that if they experienced homophobic hostility or violence they would first turn to their partner, friends or family for support. In terms of professional services, the general view was that they would first look closely at the service to see if they were going to feel comfortable there. A lot of white services are

not seen to be Koori-friendly, and a lot of Koori services are not seen to be lesbian-friendly; obviously this limits the options for Indigenous lesbians.

The one participant who had used the Lesbian and Gay Anti-Violence Project stated that she had found it very helpful. In contrast, concern was expressed by another participant about the 'Safe Place' project because it is dependent on door staff not being racist to Koori people when they seek help.

Whilst all of the women said that they would prefer to seek professional help from a black person, there was agreement that they would be 'confident enough' to report an incident to the Police, via the GLLOs, if it happened in Sydney. However, this was qualified by comments such as 'You'd be hesitant' or 'I'd be sceptical about the Police.' One participant stated that she had reported an incident to the Surry Hills Police, via a GLLO, and found that she was treated with respect. Another had accompanied a friend who reported an incident to a GLLO and also felt that it was dealt with very well. None of these women believed that ten years ago they would have felt sufficiently confident to make a Police report. Several said that they probably would *not* report an incident to the Police if it happened in a country town. All participants supported the view that Koori people need to be able to feel that they are able to make reports to the Police:

*'It's about time that Koori people feel they can go to the Police. Koori people need to start going to the Police. ...The days are gone when you copped a hiding and shut up about it.'*

### **3.2.5 Other issues**

During the course of the discussion several groups of people were identified as more likely to attract homophobic abuse.

The first of these was *young Koori women*. At the same time, some members of the group suggested that such women 'really know how to handle themselves' and thus are less vulnerable to hostility than older Koori women.

The second vulnerable group was Koori lesbians who don't look 'normal' or who fit the stereotype of a 'butch dyke'. Not looking normal is a question both of how you act and how you look.

Thirdly, Koori lesbians who are successful in their careers or who have a lot of status were identified by some members of the group as more vulnerable to homophobic discrimination or abuse.

*'There are not a lot of black jobs up the ladder. So you're more noticeable. ... They're all after the job. So if a happy girl gets it, they're pissed off. You're more subject to it.'*

In terms of groups in the community who are more likely to be homophobic, the participants believed that 'strong Christians', whether Indigenous or non-Indigenous, were a particular source of concern. In contrast, 'battlers' and people who have experienced a lot of 'hard knocks' in life were identified by some participants as being less judgmental of Koori lesbians and, in particular, more accepting than the educated 'intelligensia'. It was suggested that this might be because there is a shared background of having 'done things hard'.

All four participants believed that it is important to stand up to racism and homophobia, to be open as a black lesbian wherever it is possible, and to challenge these forms of prejudice from both the white and the black communities. More and better education, particularly in schools and TAFEs, is needed to assist in this process.

## 3.3 Group 3: Lesbian and gay parents

### 3.3.1 Introduction

Of the nine parents in this group, eight were female and one was male; all were biological parents or currently parenting children. The group discussion focused on homophobic hostility in relation to the participants, their children, and issues of parenting generally.

### 3.3.2 Experiences of types of abuse

Most members of this group stated that they had experienced some form of verbal abuse because of their sexuality. In most instances this was from strangers, though one woman said that she had been called a 'filthy lesbian' by a neighbour. Only one member of the group had experienced physical violence on the basis of her sexuality; this had come from her father and brother.

Participants said that it was difficult to generalise about the extent to which they feel vulnerable to homophobic abuse because this is dependent on the situation or context. For example, some participants said that they feel more vulnerable to homophobia from strangers when they look 'like a lesbian' (eg look 'butch') and are in an area where this is not likely to be accepted. The inner-city was seen by a number of the participants as an area where they feel less likely to be judged by others and thus more likely to be safe from homophobia. By contrast, the western suburbs (and also Norton Street on a Saturday night) were identified by several people as areas where they do not feel safe. One woman from the south west region of Sydney said that people are 'very homophobic down that way'. Whilst most participants said that they do not feel vulnerable to violence from people they know, several commented on situations within their wider family that make them anxious, concerned or uncomfortable.

The possibility that *their children* might be exposed to homophobia was a concern for all members of the group. This related both to strangers and to family members. For example, having experienced homophobic violence from both her father and her brother (referred to above), one participant now chooses not to go to her brother's house or to take her children there. Another commented that *emotional* abuse from family members is more of a problem than physical violence. For example one of her cousins had said, in front of her son, that lesbians should not be allowed to have children; the child, however, was able to understand that it is his cousin who has the problem, not his mother. Another participant, who had only recently left a heterosexual marriage, said that although family and friends have been very judgemental about her new lifestyle, they have not directly harassed or abused her. However, along with several other participants, she was very concerned that family and friends would try to 'get at me through my children'.

*'It is unfair to go through our kids to get at us.'*

*The school* was identified as a likely place for the children of lesbian or gay parents to experience homophobia from people they know. Some participants were aware that their child had been teased or harassed in this way.

*'We're all acutely aware of our kids' welfare.'*

*'Kids can be teased at school if they have gay or lesbian parents.'*

Holidays were also mentioned by several people as times when you have to be very careful, especially about choosing where to go. If you pick the wrong place and people are uncomfortable with your sexuality, then your children will suffer too. For example, one participant reported an oppressive experience on a well-known island resort, and had ended up leaving early because she felt it was a 'heterosexual hell'.

*'Holidays are really hard. A huge issue.'*

There were different views expressed in the group about how to approach the risk of homophobia. Some were of the view that it is best to let people gradually come to accept you:

*'People will move through acceptance.'*

*'The more they get to know you, the more they may change.'*

*'Some people think, two mothers - lucky kid!'*

Others said that they tend to minimise the amount of contact that they and their children have with people who make them feel vulnerable. For example, one participant commented that in the face of family homophobia, lesbian parents can create alternative support groups:

*'We create our own families. We're good at it. If you have hostile family members, you get good at making friends.'*

### **3.3.3 Effects of abuse**

Most participants agreed that experiencing abuse, such as homophobic remarks in public, was much worse if their children were with them at the time:

*'It's awfully threatening. You want to run and hide and protect your kids.'*

One of the risks created by homophobic hostility, mentioned by a number of participants, was that it can shape the broader decisions they make in life:

*'We change our lives to be safe'.*

*'Everyone has built a little wall, a boundary, around their lives. We have created safe spaces and communities where we can be ourselves without fear or concern.'*

In particular, numbers of the parents referred to various things that they do to minimise the risk that their children will be exposed to homophobia. For example, one woman said that she and her partner send their children to a school that is quite a long way from where they live, and which involves a lot of daily travel for them, because they believe that that school is less likely to be homophobic. Another said that she never allows her children's female friends to stay overnight, out of concern that someone might accuse her of inappropriate behaviour. The male member of the group said that he is particularly careful about his children's friends, both male and female, as he has concerns about possible accusations of paedophilia because of its assumed association with homosexuality.

Some other participants commented that they try to ensure that they live in areas, such as the inner suburbs, where they think their children will be less likely to come up against homophobic talk or behaviour. One woman said that having moved further out of the city in order to get more space for her family, she now feels less safe. In short, the majority of participants indicated that they do many things, both small and large, to try to control their immediate family environment:

*'I would never move from that place [the inner-west] because it's safe.'*

*'I would avoid moving to the country. It would be too much for a lesbian couple and a kid. I'd be afraid of violence.'*

*'If you have these choices it's good. But not everyone has choices.'*

*'A heterosexual family does not have to put this energy into it.'*

However, a couple of participants noted that you can never fully control what your children will be exposed to:

*'People say homophobic things to kids without us knowing.'*

Several of the participants felt that their children have learnt to make their own judgments about people and situations and, in some instances, will modify their behaviour in order to avoid homophobia. One woman pointed out that this is not necessarily because they are ashamed of their parents but, rather, because they have the strength to make these kinds of decisions. Another commented that no matter what you do, children will inevitably make friends with people who are homophobic, especially as they get older, when you have less control over the situation:

*'You have to trust their judgement. As teenagers, they have to see or test it for themselves, what homophobia means. It's good to let them experience it and find ways of dealing with it.'*

Most participants agreed that there are situations where you have to be circumspect about your sexuality for your children's sake, and that this is a strategic decision that is necessary in the short-term. However, another argued that in the long-term this is more detrimental:

*'Our children are not safe if we hide. We need to come out in the long term, but to assess each situation'.*

Some of the parents said that it is important to explain homophobia to children, so that they know what to expect and how to deal with it. However, one participant said that you have to be very careful about how you do this as it can have some undesired effects:

*'If you tell kids that homophobia is an issue, then you instil the concern in them. They may not have thought of it before this.'*

### **3.3.4 Services and agencies**

Most people in this group said that they would feel confident about making a complaint about homophobic violence to the Police. They had a positive view of the GLOs but pointed out that not all stations have them.

In terms of accessing broader services, several people stated that they tend to make enquiries about a service before they use it, to ensure that it is lesbian/gay-friendly. Some said that word of mouth was the best way to find out these things; however, if you are in a crisis situation, this can be difficult.

One participant commented that existing NSW laws, such as anti-discrimination law, do offer some protection to lesbians and gay men.

### 3.3.5 Other issues

Some members of the group suggested that they and their children can have positive effects on other people and on the problem of homophobia generally. For example, lesbian or gay parents often challenge homophobia in schools, or their children challenge it in other children who, in turn, talk to their parents about it:

*'We've changed the school.'*

*'Your kids can influence other kids and their parents.'*

*'It's about making it normal. We are unusual but it's not that odd.'*

It was also said that the experience of *co-parents* will be different from the experience of biological parents. For example, the former have to deal with the assumption that they are not the 'real' parent. In addition, children's experience will be quite different depending on whether they were born into a lesbian/gay family or whether they were born into a heterosexual family where one parent has subsequently come out as lesbian or gay:

*'If you're new to coming out, it is more difficult to talk to them [your children] because you're still dealing with it yourself.'*

A number of the participants stated that much more needs to be done in both schools and childcare centres to tackle homophobia. Anti-bullying campaigns are a good start, and do help, but they do not go far enough. Specific anti-homophobia campaigns are needed, and more resources need to be dedicated to this issue.

## 3.4 Group 4: Young lesbians and gay men

### 3.4.1 Introduction

There were eight females and five males in this group. Their ages ranged from 17 to early 20s. Whilst the majority of participants were from an Anglo/white ethnic background, the group also included several people who identified as Asian or Aboriginal.

### 3.4.2 Experiences of types of abuse

Four of the people in this group (two women and two men) had experienced homophobic violence. One woman described a situation where she and her girlfriend were assaulted by a man late at night in Newtown. He initially approached them to sell drugs; when they said they weren't interested, he became hostile, calling them anti-lesbian names and physically assaulting both of them. The woman attending the group received six broken ribs and was hospitalised for eight days. The other female participant stated that she had experienced violence from a group of students who went to her high school. She said that, after she came out as a lesbian, she was harassed and bashed by this group. They followed her home from school every day for a month. When she eventually fought back, punching one of her attackers in the face, the harassment stopped as she became feared by the other students.

As for the two male participants, both had experienced violence from family members. One reported that his brother has been violent towards him because of his sexuality, in one instance going so far as to break his jaw. This hostility is ongoing and he feels that it is not safe for him to be around his brother. The other participant said that when he came out to his mother, she jabbed a fork into his hand.



Other participants indicated that they had not experienced physical violence on the basis of their sexuality. However, most felt that the possibility of such violence is a concern for them:

*'It hasn't happened to me but it could happen.'*

*'Even if the chances are slim, it's still there in the back of my mind.'*

Virtually all members of the group stated that they have experienced some form of verbal abuse from strangers:

*'The most crap is from strangers.'*

*'Lots of abuse from cars. More if you're holding hands with your girlfriend. Triple if you go out west.'*

Apart from those participants who had already experienced violence from family members, most of the group said that they do not fear homophobic hostility from their immediate family. However, several indicated that they have not yet told their family about their sexuality. Among those who *had* told their families, a couple of people said that there are certain relatives whom they deliberately 'keep in the dark' because of concerns about homophobia.

A number of people in the group identified high school (either now or in the past) as a place where they feel/felt vulnerable to hostility from people they know. Some participants stated that they had had 'terrible' experiences of homophobia in high school:

*'People in high school were the worst.'*

*'There was very overt bullying in my school.'*

*'There was this graffiti that said 'X is a lesbian. Beware!'*

*'I used to get called Priscilla because I hung out with the girls.'*

*'I got lots of harassment, at a boys' Catholic school. I got spat on, ball bearings thrown at me, name engraved on the wall, work graffitied on. A boy above me had committed suicide and the assumption was that it was because of homophobia. The school counsellor said: "Don't come out."'*

*'I came out to a small circle of friends. But they told others who picked on me. The teachers were supportive.'*

There were some members of the group, however, both male and female, who said that they had experienced little homophobia at school. This included some participants who attend or have attended all-girl schools. One of these said that she has been at the same small school since she was four years old, and experienced no problems when she came out to friends. She feels that this is because everyone knows her. In contrast, another participant who attended a 'huge anonymous school' said that it 'felt dangerous when the whole school found out.' Another participant pointed out that even if you go to a school where there is little overt homophobia this doesn't mean that it is acceptable. For example, if you are gay/lesbian, people may just ignore it and never talk about or acknowledge it.

*'Some gay people paved the way before me. It was okay to be gay. Usually you think role model stuff doesn't work. But it kind of does.'*

As mentioned above, most participants said that they have concerns about the possibility of homophobic abuse from strangers. In terms of particular areas that do not feel safe, there was some agreement in the group that the far western suburbs of Sydney feel more homophobic than other areas. This view came not only from people who live in the inner city but also from several participants who currently live in the west or who grew up there. While there were differing views about whether Oxford Street is safe, several people commented that the Mardi Gras Parade does *not* feel safe, especially because there are so many drunk heterosexual people there.

*'In the far western suburbs even wearing a nose ring is foreign or wrong.'*

*'On Oxford Street you're a target. Too easily identified. I always walk with other people on Oxford Street.'*

*'You get profanities from cars on Oxford Street.'*

Several participants said that they do not feel safe in small country towns. However, one participant said that he always feels safe to hold hands with his boyfriend when he goes to his home town. This is because he has lots of family and relatives there and he feels that they would protect him if anything happened.

Several people in the group said that they avoided areas where there are a lot of people who have strong religious beliefs; this concern included both Christians and Muslims. One participant commented that it is not just a fear of homophobic hostility that motivates her to avoid these areas; it is also the fear that no one will assist her if something does happen. Some people also mentioned 'straight pubs' as places to avoid.

*'Churches. You don't go there.'*

*'Lakemba.... Traditional Muslim people.'*

*'You feel like you have to take responsibility yourself because you're broadcasting it. You'll have to deal with any problem yourself. In those places, no one will stick up for you.'*

*'I avoid straight pubs. Too many straight blokey blokes.'*

### **3.4.3 Effects of abuse**

Several members of the group commented that as young lesbians and gay men they believe that they have the right to be themselves and should not have to hide their sexuality in order to be safe. But this is tempered by the day-to-day reality that it is not always in their best interests to be open about their sexuality. Most participants indicated that they are conscious of disclosing their sexuality in many situations and environments, but that their sense of safety is always dependent on the context. This is especially so when meeting new people or moving into new situations where they are uncertain how people will react. Most situations are weighed up in terms of whether or not they are likely to be safe.

*'You shouldn't have to hide to be safe. But you have to be pragmatic.'*

*'You trust your gut.'*

*'You meet people, you talk first, then you reveal your sexuality.'*

*'If I get asked directly, I'll say. But to be safe, I don't promote it.'*

A number of these participants thus referred to the relationship between homophobic hostility and visibility. They agreed that the amount of abuse experienced from strangers has a lot to do with how visible an individual is as lesbian or gay. Someone who fits a stereotypical image will be 'more visible' and thus more vulnerable to abuse. However, some felt that hiding your sexuality does not guarantee safety.

Some members of the group felt that the decision to not disclose their sexuality in every situation is not just about a fear of homophobia. It is also about the fact that it is not necessary to come out in all situations; sometimes you just want the person to know you first.

*'Some people have it the hardest – camp boys, butch dykes. For some other people it's easier to hide.'*

*'Everyone in the street doesn't need to know. Just my friends. If you look gay, you'll get gay bashed. You're asking for trouble.'*

*'You might still cop it if you do hide it.'*

Thus the majority of participants saw a close connection between safety, visibility, and appearance. They said that they usually think carefully about what clothes they will wear and whether it will make them look gay/lesbian. In addition to these kinds of small daily choices, clothing was said by some to be a bigger issue when they go away, for example to another city, their home town, or a country area. Not everyone agreed that they automatically tone down their appearance in such situations, but a number indicated that they give it deliberate thought because they want to avoid homophobic remarks or behaviour.

*'So much is about how we look. What does a lesbian look like?'*

*'Appearance, that's all strangers have to judge you on.'*

*'I think, can I wear that gay shirt in Perth?'*

*'When I go away I take a whole new wardrobe.'*

However, one participant pointed out that whilst you can select your clothes in the hope of being safe from homophobia, there are many things about your appearance that you cannot change so easily. Another suggested that lesbians and gay men are always having to weigh up the cost of violence against the cost of losing their sense of self.

*'If you change who you are, you do more damage.'*

*'I would rather get bashed than hide myself. You end up giving away a bit of yourself every single day.'*

#### **3.4.4 Services and agencies**

Not many of these participants had accessed services or agencies in relation to homophobic abuse. However, the woman who was assaulted in Newtown did report the incident to the Police, who came to the hospital to question her. She described this as a 'bad time' and said that the service she received from the Police was 'terrible'. For example, she resented the fact that the Police asked what she was doing in that part of Newtown at that time of night. She asked to talk to a GLLO but was told that none was available at that time; she was told that a GLLO would call her, but this did not happen. No charges were laid by the Police as they were unable to identify the attacker.

Most of the participants said that they would report an incident to the Police if it was serious enough. Some commented that it is *important* for such incidents to be recorded. Even those who had had a negative interaction with the Police said that this would not stop them from reporting an incident again.

Several people in the group said that they would go to the Lesbian and Gay Anti-Violence Project if they needed to.

There was little agreement about which services people would *avoid*; most participants had a negative opinion about one service or another. Often this negative perception was based on privacy. For example, a couple of participants commented that they would avoid hospital emergency rooms as they 'ask too many questions' and are too intrusive.

#### **3.4.5 Other issues**

There was agreement amongst many in the group that more needs to be done in schools to address homophobia. One-off campaigns are not sufficient; regular and consistent anti-homophobic material needs to be built into the curriculum. Further, it was suggested that if this is left until high school, young people (both straight and gay/lesbian) are more resistant because they feel self-conscious and awkward about these issues at that stage in their life. Hence, it was suggested that anti-homophobia education needs to begin in *primary school*.

### **3.5 Group 5: Mature age lesbians and gay men**

#### **3.5.1 Introduction**

This group included four lesbians and four gay men, all aged over 50.

#### **3.5.2 Experience of abuse**

Several people in the group said that the homophobia they experienced these days tended to be more 'subtle' or 'hidden' than in their younger days; changes in the social climate and such things as the introduction of anti-discrimination laws had had an effect in this regard. On the other hand, verbal abuse from strangers (eg young males in cars) remained very common: 'It's still happening'.

The Oxford street area, these participants felt, was no longer particularly safe for lesbians and gay men, because of the large numbers of heterosexual people (especially young men) who now went there – at least partly because of the opportunities offered them to abuse and harass lesbians and gay men. What had previously been something of a refuge for gays and lesbians had thus become 'a spectator sport for straights'.

Women in the group felt that lesbians were vulnerable to abuse of various kinds (eg 'being called names in the supermarket'), in part because they presented as women without men; this tended to bring out hostility in straight men. Straight men 'pick up on the difference,' or on your strength.

One lesbian who described herself as 'black' said that she more commonly encountered abuse related to race or gender than to sexuality. Her only experience of homophobic abuse had been from Indigenous people, and once when participating in a 'queer march'.

Several people in this group had risen to hold senior positions in various organisations. Some spoke of experiencing verbally abusive and damaging treatment from co-workers. For example, their sexuality had been revealed or been 'thrown at' them in the course of unrelated workplace discussions or disagreements. Among other things, considerations about likely abuse and harassment affected the jobs or positions that lesbians and gay men chose to apply for.

One woman, on the other hand, described herself as very strong and assertive in her mainstream workplace; she felt that she owed this to the younger gays and lesbians coming along behind her.

As in several other groups, these participants identified 'Christians' as likely to be homophobic. It was also suggested that ordinary people or 'battlers', having experienced problems in life themselves, tended to be *less* homophobic than 'the dedicated middle class'.

### **3.5.3 Effects of abuse**

One of the effects of homophobic abuse for these older people had been to lead them to try to arrange their lives – including, for example, where they lived – in ways that they believed offered them a reasonable degree of safety and security. One woman, for example, said that she found that a suburb like Marrickville was a good place to reside because of the wide variety of people who lived there. Another woman, by contrast, told of a series of abusive situations and incidents that, as an 'out' lesbian and active feminist, she had encountered when living in a country town.

Two people in this group had immigrated to Australia from overseas, in part to avoid family homophobia and ostracism.

A lesbian grandmother commented that she 'watched' or censored her conversation and behaviour around her children and grandchildren – but she supposed that this was not much different from what any grandmother might do.

Several people in the group said that while homophobic abuse might not currently be a big issue for them personally, they were very aware of the problems and risks that younger or less experienced people might encounter – from cruel teasing at school through to suicides by 'kids in the country'.

### **3.5.4 Services and agencies**

Participants in this group generally said they would be prepared to go to the Police about homophobic harassment or violence, though they would prefer to deal with a GLLO. Doctors and hospitals could be 'a worry', said one man, because they were not always reliable on issues of privacy and security.

Types of agencies that various people said they would *not* use included trade unions and religious organisations.

### **3.5.5 Other issues**

On the one hand some of the women in this group spoke of increasing feelings of vulnerability as they grew older – for example, fears relating to living alone. On the other hand, these mature-age gay men and lesbians

had to a large extent ‘sorted out’ their lives and established patterns of living (eg where they worked, where they lived, where they shopped, where and how they socialised) that they felt to some extent insulated them from homophobic abuse. One lesbian said that being older made her ‘invisible’; and thus safer; she was also probably less cocky or cheeky than she had once been. Another woman noted that ‘two old ducks’ or ‘two old grannies’ were generally safe to cuddle or hold hands.

As they got older, lesbians and gay men thus tended to become less visible *as* lesbians or gay men, and this could tend to reduce the likelihood of their suffering *homophobic* abuse as such.

By contrast, said some people in the group, young people were ‘still exploring’ themselves and their sexuality, and this placed them at risk. Peer pressures, which might involve taking unwise risks, were much more of an issue for young people. One man commented that younger people, for example, were more likely to ‘go out and get drunk’, and this again increased the level of danger they might face.

A woman in this group commented that the *children* of gay and lesbian parents were one group at risk of homophobic-related abuse.

## 3.6 Group 6: Asian gay men

### 3.6.1 Introduction

Although 12 people took part in this discussion, three were Caucasian partners of Asian men, and four were Asian men who had only very recently arrived in Sydney and/or spoke little English. There were thus five Asian men who actively contributed to the discussion – two of them Australian-born, the others born overseas.

### 3.6.2 Experience of abuse

People in the group said that verbal abuse or the like (whistles, catcalls, offensive gestures) were quite common. Being yelled at from cars in the Oxford Street area was a fact of life – these were ‘things we have to accept’. Like most other focus group participants, they said that the safest course was to ignore and not respond to abuse of this nature.

*‘We can’t do anything, anyway’.*

The participants touched on an issue that was more clearly spelled out by a man of Asian background who took part in Group 8 – namely that numbers of Asian gay men were likely to be perceived by potential abusers or bullies as slight, young, frail and foreign, and therefore easy prey. You were especially vulnerable, some said, if you got a bit drunk.

One man in the group told of experiencing an assault and robbery committed by someone who had posed as gay. He (the Asian man) had reported this matter to a GLLO and was happy with the way it was handled; he appreciated dealing with a Police officer who was well informed about and sensitive to gay men’s issues.

Like the Indigenous gay men, the Asian men referred to encountering racist treatment within the gay community – for example, at bars and in internet chat rooms.

### 3.6.3 Effects of abuse

Men in this group spoke of various ways in which they were likely to modify their behaviour in order to reduce the risk of homophobic abuse. Some, for example, said that they would not choose to hold hands with a partner in public. On the other hand, simply being with a Caucasian friend or partner, it was said, was enough to suggest to people that you were gay.

*'People just look at us'.*

One of the men in this group had trained as a schoolteacher, but had found practice-teaching Year 9-Year 10 boys an extremely negative experience, involving both racist and homophobic abuse. Other staff-members, he said, had done nothing to assist. This and related experiences ultimately led him to give up his teaching career and embark on a different degree altogether.

As in other groups, participants thus spoke of making life choices – for instance on career or place of employment – that were likely to reduce risks of exposure to homophobic abuse. For example, a gay teacher was thought likely to be much safer in a *girls'* school than in a *boys'* school – where it was always likely to be 'faggot this, faggot that'. The tourism and hospitality industries were seen as relatively safe fields for gay men.

### **3.6.4 Services and agencies**

These participants generally said that they would be willing to report a homophobic incident to the Police. As noted above, one had had good experience of dealing with a Gay and Lesbian Liaison Officer.

One man who was a student said that he would be likely to report homophobic abuse to his Student Representative Council.

### **3.6.5 Other Issues**

It was interesting that while these participants spoke of various sorts of homophobic abuse they had experienced in Sydney, several said that they regarded Australia as a better place to be than an Asian country where homosexuality was actively repressed.

## **3.7 Group 7: Gay men and lesbians of Middle-Eastern background**

### **3.7.1 Introduction**

There were five men and five women in this group. One woman was of Egyptian background, and one was Jordanian-born; the other participants were of Lebanese background (mostly Australian-born, but others who had come to Australia as children).

### **3.7.2 Experience of abuse**

Participants in this group believed that gay men were certainly in general less safe from abuse or violence than straight men, and lesbians less safe than other women. As lesbians or gay men, it was said, we attract 'lots of stares' and 'dirty looks', verbal abuse and the like.

Although people in the group thus referred to some issues involving strangers (eg abusive young men in Oxford street<sup>3</sup>, harassment by work colleagues and the like), they focused primarily on homophobia and abuse experienced within their own families and communities. They indicated that the issues were broadly the same whether they came from Christian or Muslim families. One young man, however, was 'out' at his church.

It was said that while Lebanese families typically have some ideas about male homosexuality and gay men, lesbianism was largely 'unheard of', not a recognised issue at all. Male homosexual behaviour might in fact be

<sup>3</sup> Sometimes it was said, the abusive young men might themselves be Lebanese.

tolerated to some extent within the culture, so long as it was not highly visible or regarded as a way of life. For example, so long as a man was married, there might be no great concern about what his sex life involved.

*'Get married then do what you want'.*

No such tolerance, however, was extended to women.

It was extremely difficult, people said, for gay men or lesbians to express their sexuality while also remaining part of the family. This was especially true for young women, who were likely to face difficulties if they did anything other than remain at home until marrying. Any sort of declaration of independence was likely to be an issue, let alone coming out as a lesbian. Even getting her hair cut short, said one woman, had attracted attention and comment. 'Staying home and keeping your head down' was the safest course. One woman reported that when she did decide to leave home, her family felt that this was so shameful that they had little choice but to move interstate. Lebanese families in Australia, some participants said, retained more rigid and conservative attitudes than were now found in Lebanon itself.

People in the group said that homophobic abuse from family or community could take various forms, including exclusion, verbal abuse, assault, stalking, threats of violence and even death threats. 'Honour killings', said one woman, is a possible response, and would be the most extreme expression of a family's feelings of shame about a daughter who did not conform to family and community expectations.

My brother is 'always watching' to see what I do, said one lesbian. You feel 'so petrified to tell the family'. Even one of my 'cool' brothers, said another woman, called her 'a fucking lesbian' when he was angry about something.

The sorts of people who had the confidence to come to this group meeting, it was said, were 'the lucky ones'. Some Middle Eastern women would 'rather die than come out as a lesbian'. One woman in the group said that, for her part, she would 'rather die free'.

Some of the participants – though not all – thought that the level of intolerance and hostility would gradually decrease over time, for example as the younger generation intermarried with people from other backgrounds. *Education* in Australia was a potentially important factor here.

*Outside* the family and the community, it was said, circumstances and level of risk varied from one situation to another; in the workplace, for example, some people had a hard time and others not. Within an organisation like the Police, for example, it was suggested that lesbians tended to attract less homophobic abuse than gay men.

Family-related fears, however, could follow you into the broader world: for example there was always the chance that the taxi that you and your friends hailed in Oxford Street would be driven by a Lebanese man connected with your community.

### **3.7.3 Effects of abuse**

For numbers of people in this group, the hostile family and community attitudes described above meant living in two worlds and living with a lot of lies and deception – which had very negative impacts on the individual. 'We have a very strong connection with the family' that cannot just be abandoned. On the other hand we have to constantly watch what we say or do within the family – so that communication is severely undermined.

If the immediate family *did* accept a gay or lesbian child, it was said, they risked ostracism from others in their community. For example, if an older daughter brought shame on her family by moving away from home, this could prejudice a younger sister's chances of finding a husband.



One man described a severe break with his family that resulted from his disclosing his sexuality. Relations with his immediate family had slowly improved, but things remained extremely difficult in the wider family; for example his uncles had made threats of violence designed to prevent him from attending his father's funeral.

One man who had only very recently acknowledged his sexuality said that fears about homophobia and abuse had previously kept him 'completely paralysed' – and had for a long period led him to deny his sexuality even to himself. Once he began to come out, he was surprised at the different reactions he encountered: a brother whom he had expected to react badly was in fact quite supportive, whereas his 'best friend' had been hostile and abusive.

Other effects of homophobic abuse and hostility included depression and possibly other mental health problems.

A man who had experienced harsh rejection from his family said that his reaction has been to put his energy into helping to create a confident and visible community of Middle Eastern lesbians and gay men. Somebody, he said, 'has to do the hard yards'.

*'You can't hide all your life'.*

Others were not so sure.

*'Is ten years of hating worth it?'*

### **3.7.4 Services and agencies**

Only one person in the group (a young man) had ever approached the Police about an abusive incident. Some said, however, that if they had a relevant problem they would go to a Gay and Lesbian Liaison Officer.

Several people made the point, however, that going to the Police in relation to abuse *from family or community members* was hardly likely to help. For example, taking out an Apprehended Violence Order against your brother would have enormous repercussions and the offending brother would no doubt be seen as the victim. Even if the abuse or attack were committed by a stranger, involving the Police could be counter-productive because it would increase the likelihood of the family finding out about one's sexuality.

### **3.7.5 Other issues**

Like people in several other groups, these participants thought that *young gay men* were a group very vulnerable to abuse from strangers; if they looked 'soft' or not macho they were easily stereotyped and targeted. The group also thought that transsexual or transgender people were very vulnerable.

Given the family and community attitudes described above, *school-based information and programs dealing with sexuality and homophobia* were again seen as extremely important by people in this group.

## **3.8 Group 8: Gay men in Western Sydney**

### **3.8.1 Introduction**

This group meeting was held in western Sydney; it was designed to include people without university education and not working in professional/managerial jobs. Since there were only four participants in the group and each was rather different from the others, there were fewer clear themes to this discussion.

### 3.8.2 Experience of abuse

When asked about the experiences of gay men compared with other men, one of these participants made the point that there is a lot of violence (for example fights at pubs) in the lives of some straight men. The abuse, harassment or violence faced by gay men, however, was different in nature. For instance a man who was obviously gay, outside a gay bar, was clearly vulnerable to abuse from strangers – especially if he was drunk. Another participant agreed that alcohol could be a significant factor – both in making the abuser more aggressive and in rendering the victim more vulnerable.

In this group it was said that the people who yelled abuse from cars now tended to be younger than in the past – in their teens rather than their twenties.

A participant said that one of the most intimidating situations he had encountered was being in Surry Hills late in the afternoon when a large, alcohol-affected crowd was returning to Central Station from a Moore Park football match – all the more so if the fans were on the losing side.

*'You wouldn't want to be holding hands with your boyfriend in that situation'.*

It was said that areas known to attract many gay men – eg various parts of Surry Hills and Newtown – also tend to attract homophobic attackers or abusers. Abusers target such areas with the aim of finding 'some gays to hassle'. Oxford Street these days has 'more and more straights', it was said. Walking to and from the big gay/lesbian parties at Fox Studios could also be dangerous.

One man in the group, who was of Asian background, described himself as 'easy to pick' as gay. Simply being himself, he said ('I walk the way I walk'), he was frequently subjected to abuse and harassment – for example while travelling on the train. Other passengers, he said, typically ignored this abuse. He said that apart from 'yobbos', *Christians* felt that they had the right to harass and harangue him; one such man, for example, had followed him from carriage to carriage when he tried to get away. Another person in the group reported avoiding trains and railway stations as likely to be dangerous. Bystanders, he agreed, were too scared to assist if you were attacked.

Some in this group felt that Western Sydney is not necessarily more homophobic than other parts of Sydney. For example, a transgender participant in the group reported having quite positive and supportive neighbours and local friends. Presenting as a woman, she in fact received less abuse and harassment than in her younger days as a gay man.

One man referred to harassment or violence associated with gay beats. On one occasion, for instance, he had gone back to his car to find that his headlights (and the lights of the several other cars parked nearby) had been smashed.

Two men in the group commented that while not *generally* abusive, people you know (for example a fellow-worker or a brother-in-law) may seize on your sexuality in the course of an unrelated argument or dispute ('Bloody poofter ...').

### 3.8.3 Effects of abuse

One participant in this group reported two incidents of harassment and blackmail in the workplace before he 'came out'. He said he had become 'severely depressed' as a result.

The one Asian participant in this group said that his 'gay' manner restricted his employment options. These days, he said, he tended to tell a prospective employer by telephone that he was gay, to avoid 'wasting everybody's time' at an interview.

### **3.8.4 Services and agencies**

One man in the group had gone to the Police about an incident at a beat, and said that they had been fine about it, treating it like any other complaint.

Another participant, however, felt that taking something to the Police could lead you into difficult and unpleasant situations.

*'You feel traumatised enough already'.*

*'I'd be very reluctant to go to the Police unless I was very sure of the outcome'.*

On the other hand, there was value in getting incidents of abuse recorded; GLLOs in particular could put such information to good use, eg to justify increased patrols in certain areas.

In this group it was also said that frequent Police 'drug raids', with dogs, on gay venues did nothing to convince gay men that the Police were 'on side'. That's the 'main time you see them', said one participant – 'coming into the pubs and clubs with the dogs'.

One participant said that if in need of support or assistance he would not go to any church or religious organisations, and would be careful about choosing a doctor to consult. Nobody in this group knew anything much about the Anti-Violence Project.

### 3.9 Some common themes

The eight focus groups covered a wide range of issues, but there were also a number of common themes and issues that emerged across the groups.

- Physical violence based on homophobia was a *concern* for far more people than had actually experienced it. Such concern, however, was by no means unrealistic or unjustified; for example almost everyone in the groups had experienced *verbal* abuse or other forms of harassment, and many people had friends or acquaintances who had been assaulted or attacked.
- Numbers of people in the focus groups thought that inner Sydney was generally a safer place for gay men and lesbians than either the western suburbs or country areas.
- However, Sydney's Oxford Street was no longer generally seen as a comfortable and safe place for lesbians and gay men. This area and its venues, said one woman, had become 'a spectator sport for straights'. Some people made similar comments in relation to the annual Mardi Gras parade.
- Levels of safety were said to vary substantially from one place or situation to another, and gay men and lesbians needed to assess risk case by case. There is often a trade-off between 'being yourself' and open about your sexuality, and reducing the risk of homophobic abuse or violence.
- Some people may have more options than others when it comes to keeping their sexuality hidden. There was a common observation across a number of the groups that the people who were *most* vulnerable to homophobic abuse and violence were younger gay men and lesbians who conformed to a stereotype ('butch dykes', 'baby dykes', 'gay pretty boys').
- Many people feel that responding to incidents of abuse or fighting back is likely to make things worse.
- Many of the participants, across the groups, referred to the key importance of *schools* in providing information about sexuality and homophobia, and in addressing the issue of homophobic abuse. In part this was because the school was itself the site of a great deal of homophobic behaviour, but it also reflected the fact that for many young gays and lesbians the school was the place where they had the best chance of getting clear and accurate information.
- Across the groups many participants referred to religious organisations, and in particular to practising Christians and Muslims, as significant sources of homophobic hostility.
- Experience and concerns relating to homophobic abuse and violence have far-reaching effects on the way lesbians and gay men live. There are numerous decisions and choices (large and small) that they make, and numerous ways in which they modify their behaviour, in an effort to reduce the likelihood of abuse.
- It appears that many gay men and lesbians (far more than 10 or 20 years ago) would today be prepared to go to the Police about a homophobic incident if they felt this was warranted. Most would prefer to deal with a Gay and Lesbian Liaison Officer – though the numbers of GLLOs are limited. Despite progress in Police/community relations, however, there are still many gay and lesbians who – for a variety of reasons – would hesitate to go to the Police.

## 4 Survey Respondent Characteristics

Sections 4-8 of the report present a summary of the survey results. In this section we consider various characteristics of those who participated in the survey.

A total of 604 completed questionnaires were received by the 10 June closing date. Four of these were excluded from the analysis as they were completed by non-residents of NSW, and related to incidents which had occurred outside NSW.

Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number and may therefore not add to exactly 100.

### 4.1 Gender

Just over half the respondents (53%) were male, and 45% female; 11 respondents (2%) identified themselves as transgender.

### 4.2 Sexuality

Half of the respondents identified themselves as *gay or homosexual* men and 42% as *lesbian*. Six per cent of respondents (37 people) identified themselves as *bisexual*; among these, 14 were males, 21 females and two transgender. Six respondents (1%) identified themselves as *heterosexual*, and 2% as 'other' in terms of sexuality.

### 4.3 Age

The highest numbers of responses came from people aged between 30 and 39 (33%) or between 40 and 49 (28%), with slightly fewer aged 20-29 (24%). At either end of the age spectrum numbers were smaller – 5% for 16-19 year olds and 10% for those aged 50 or over.

Respondents in the 16-19 age group were mostly gay men (59%), with 25% lesbian and 9% bisexual. In the 20-29 and 30-39 age groups, the proportions of gay men and lesbians were similar to those for the total sample (that is, gay men somewhat outnumbered lesbians). In the older age groups (40-49 and 50 plus) the numbers of gay men and lesbians were virtually equal.

### 4.4 Ethnicity

The great majority of respondents (92%) identified themselves as Caucasian/Anglo/European. People identifying themselves as Aboriginal comprised 1% of the sample, as did those identifying themselves as either Torres Strait Islander or South Pacific Islander. (These small numbers were to be expected: according to the 2001 Census, 2% of the total population of NSW identify as Indigenous.)

The proportion of respondents identifying themselves as being from Asian, Middle Eastern or other ethnic backgrounds was 5% - somewhat lower than might be expected in terms of the make-up of the NSW population as a whole (eg 9.6% of Asian and 3.2% of North African or Middle Eastern ancestry - ABS, 2001).

## 4.5 Workforce status

Most respondents (75%) were in paid employment; 11% were students. Seventy-two per cent of the 16-19 year olds and 20% of 20-29 year olds were students, but some 85% of respondents in their 30s and 40s were in employment.

More of the lesbian respondents (81%) than of the gay men (74%) were in employment.

## 4.6 Occupation

Respondents who were in employment included a high proportion of Professional and Managerial workers (72%), with the second largest group being in Clerical/Service/Sales positions (14%). Eight per cent of respondents were tradespeople or manual workers. Five per cent of respondents described their occupation as 'Other', including a number of occupations that were community or health related, such as 'health worker' and 'youth worker.'

## 4.7 Education

Reflecting the respondents' occupational profile, over half (61%) were university educated, followed by 17% with a TAFE trade or technical qualification and 14% who had completed high school. Only 8% of the respondents (including a number of 16-19 year olds) had not completed secondary school.

The percentage with university education was higher among lesbian respondents (67%) than among the gay men (50%).

## 4.8 Area of residence<sup>4</sup>

Almost half of the respondents, 48%, resided in *inner suburbs of Sydney*, including the Local Government Areas of South Sydney, City of Sydney, Leichhardt, Marrickville, Botany, Woollahra, Waverley and Randwick. Another 14% lived in elsewhere in Sydney, while 35% lived in other parts of NSW. Among regional areas of the State, the Illawarra (7%), Hunter/Central Coast (7%), Southern NSW (6%), Northern Rivers/Mid North Coast (8%) and Blue Mountains (5%) regions each had a relatively even share of respondents. Only eight respondents (1%) resided in Western NSW. Three per cent did not identify their place of residence.

Gay men substantially outnumbered lesbians among the *Sydney* respondents (56% gay men, 35% lesbians). The proportion of gay male respondents was particularly high in *inner Sydney*, at 62%. Among respondents living *outside Sydney*, however, lesbians were in the majority (52% lesbians and only 39% gay men).

<sup>4</sup> Five responses were received from people living outside NSW; all but one was excluded from the study. The exception was a respondent who currently resided outside NSW but whose most recent experience of abuse occurred in NSW.

Among the *inner Sydney* respondents there was a high percentage (44%) of people aged 30-39, but relatively few people aged either 16-19 or 50plus.

Just on 60% of the *youngest* respondents (ages 16-19) came from areas outside Sydney.

The percentage of people in professional/managerial positions was significantly higher *in Sydney* (76%) than *outside Sydney* (65%). Similarly, people with university education made up 68% of *Sydney* respondents but only 48% of those living *outside Sydney*.

## 4.9 Method of responding

As previously noted, virtually even numbers of responses were received via the internet (303) and by post (297). People in older age groups (40plus) were a little less likely than younger people to respond via the internet, but there was little difference in this regard by gender, sexuality or area of residence.

## 4.10 Representativeness

As earlier indicated, no reliable baseline information is available to describe the demographic characteristics of gay men and lesbians in NSW, or to indicate where they live. Accordingly it is not possible to know how representative or otherwise the present sample is. However the study team makes the following observations:

- The survey appears to under-represent younger people aged 16-19, and older people aged 50 or over.
- People of non-English speaking background appear to be under-represented in the sample. Numbers of Indigenous respondents are small, but this is not inconsistent with their numbers in the NSW population overall.
- Approximately half of the respondents were university educated. This is considerably higher than we would expect on the basis of educational data available for the population as a whole. The possibility of replying via the internet could have had some influence here, since people with university education and people in professional/managerial occupations were more likely than most to respond in this manner. It may also be that people with higher levels of education were generally more inclined than others to choose to complete a written survey of this kind. However, it is also true that high educational levels are commonly found in surveys of gay men and lesbians.

## 4.11 Summary

- Of the 600 people who completed the survey questionnaire, 50% were gay men, 42% lesbians, and 6% bisexuals; 3% identified themselves as heterosexual or 'other'.
- The great majority of respondents (84%) were aged between 20 and 49; there were smaller numbers aged 16-19 (5%) and 50 or over (10%). Gay males dominated in the 16-19 age group, and 60% of people in this age group lived outside Sydney.
- In terms of ethnicity, 92% of respondents described themselves as Caucasian/Anglo/European. There were small numbers of Aboriginal and Islander respondents, and 5% who identified themselves as being of Asian, Middle Eastern or other ethnic backgrounds.
- Three-quarters of the respondents were in paid employment, and 11% were students. More lesbian than gay male respondents were employed. Among respondents in employment, 72% described their occupation as professional/managerial.
- Sixty-one per cent of all respondents were university-educated – 67% of lesbians and 56% of gay men.
- Just on half the respondents (48%) lived in 'inner Sydney' (the City, South Sydney and six neighbouring Local Government Areas), and a further 14% lived elsewhere in Sydney. Nineteen per cent lived in areas relatively close to Sydney (the Hunter, Central Coast, Blue Mountains and Illawarra), and 16% in other parts of the State. Three per cent did not say where they lived.
- Some 60% of the inner Sydney respondents were gay men, but lesbians predominated among respondents living *outside* Sydney.
- Approximately equal numbers of people replied via the internet and by mail. People aged 40 or over were a little less likely than younger people to respond through the internet



## 5 Attitudes to personal safety

To help clarify how safe from violence and abuse lesbian and gay respondents perceived themselves to be, they were asked how safe they felt relative to others of the same gender. Respondents were also asked to indicate their level of agreement/disagreement with eight attitudinal statements regarding their sense of personal safety, openness about their sexuality and confidence in reporting abuse to Police.

### 5.1 Feeling of personal safety relative to people who are not gay or lesbian

Among 249 lesbian respondents, 46% felt *'less safe than most other women'*, while 40% felt *'about as safe as most other women'*.

Given that *heterosexual males* are not usually considered to be a particularly vulnerable group in terms of personal safety, it was to be expected that there might be a *higher* proportion of gay male respondents who saw themselves as *less safe*. This proved to be the case: out of 297 male respondents who answered the question, 65% felt *less safe than other men*, and only 30% felt *as safe as other men*.

In terms of age, the highest percentage of men feeling *'less safe'* was among those aged 20-29 (73%), followed by those aged 50 or over (67%). Among lesbian respondents, 60% of those aged 50 or over and 51% of those aged 20-29, felt *'less safe.'*

The percentage of lesbians who felt *'less safe'* was well above average in inner Sydney, at 59%; by contrast, the relevant percentage *outside* Sydney was 39%. The percentage of lesbians feeling *'less safe'* was relatively high (65%) among those who reported having experienced homophobic abuse in the past year (see Section 6).

Among gay men, the percentage who felt *'less safe'* than other men was 67% in inner Sydney, 59% in other Sydney suburbs, and 65% elsewhere in the State. The percentage who felt *'less safe'* was again particularly high (79%) among those who reported experiencing abuse in the past year.

Both among lesbians and gay men, relatively more of those with a university education felt *'less safe'*.

### 5.2 Feelings of safety or vulnerability, openness about sexuality and confidence in reporting abuse to the Police

The overall levels of *agreement* with eight statements relating to personal safety, openness about sexuality and confidence in reporting abuse to the Police were as follows:

- *'I am generally pretty open about my sexuality'* – 81%
- *'I would be confident about reporting violence or harassment to the Police if I thought it was serious enough'* – 79%
- *'There are some things that I do, or avoid doing, because of possible harassment against lesbians/gay men/bisexuals'* – 76%
- *'As a lesbian/ gay man/bisexual I feel vulnerable to violence or harassment from strangers'* - 69%

- *'I feel pretty safe in the area where I live'* – 66%
- *'Lesbians/ gay men/bisexuals are generally safer if they hide their sexual preference'* - 55%
- *'Possible anti- gay/anti- lesbian harassment or violence is not much of a worry for me personally'* - 30%
- *'As a lesbian/gay man/ bisexual person I feel vulnerable to violence or harassment from people I know'* - 19%.

These responses show that despite a high proportion of respondents being open or 'out' about their sexuality, many reported doing – or not doing – certain things for fear of harassment, and just over half believed that *hiding* their sexual preference was a safer option for gays and lesbians. (The impacts of fear of violence or harassment on respondents' behaviour are further discussed in Section 8.) Some 70% of respondents felt vulnerable to abuse from strangers, and around 20% to abuse from people whom they knew.

### **Openness about sexuality**

Eighty-four per cent of gay male respondents, 80% of lesbians and 70% of bisexual respondents indicated that they were 'pretty open' about their sexuality.

Openness about one's sexuality was higher in *inner Sydney* (89%) and *other Sydney* suburbs (85%) than elsewhere in NSW (74%). It was lowest (58%) among the Blue Mountains respondents. Openness about sexuality was reported by 84% of those with university education, compared with 69% of those with a TAFE/trade/technical qualification.

As noted above, over half the respondents (55%) believed that lesbians/gay men/bisexuals were generally safer if they hid their sexual preference. Agreement with this proposition was relatively high among bisexual respondents (68%), among those living in 'other' Sydney suburbs (65%), and among those who had experienced homophobic abuse in the past year (62%).

### **Effects on behaviour**

Modification of one's behaviour for fear of possible violence or harassment was commonly reported by most sub-groups of respondents; for example 76% of lesbians and 77% of gay men stated that there were things they did, or refrained from doing, because of possible homophobic abuse. The relevant percentage was particularly high (82%) among those who had experienced homophobic abuse in the past year.

Relatively more of those *with* a university education than *without* reported modifying their behaviour (79% compared with 71%).

### Abuse from strangers and from non-strangers

Just on 70% of respondents said they felt vulnerable to violence or harassment from *strangers*. There were relatively small differences in levels of agreement with this proposition across gender, age or sexuality. However, those in the *inner suburbs* of Sydney were significantly more likely than most to agree (74%), and those living outside Sydney *less* likely to do so (63%). Those who had experienced abuse in the last 12 months were again more likely to agree with this statement (83%).

Overall, 19% of respondents said they felt vulnerable to abuse from *people they knew*. Bisexual respondents (43%) were significantly more likely than others to agree with this statement; more lesbians (19%) than gay men (15%) agreed. Only 16% of Sydney respondents, compared with 25% outside Sydney, said they felt vulnerable to abuse from people they knew.

In terms of age it was those in the 16-19 age group who most frequently felt vulnerable to abuse from people they knew (32%); consistent with this, *students* were significantly more likely than other occupational groups to feel vulnerable to abuse from people they knew (34%).

Level of agreement with this proposition (*fear of abuse from people known to the respondent*) was particularly high (41%) among those who had experienced abuse in the past year and who had *known the perpetrator(s)*.

### Confidence about going to the Police

Just on 80% of all respondents said they would be confident about going to the Police if the seriousness of an incident justified this. (Respondents' experiences with the Police and other relevant services are further discussed in Section 7.) However, people aged 16-19 were significantly *less* likely than others (only 48%) to agree that they would be confident about reporting violence or harassment to the Police. Only 68% of *bisexual* respondents agreed with this proposition.

Across regions, it was those in inner Sydney who were most confident about reporting abuse to Police (84% agreement); this compared with 75% *outside* Sydney. Those who had experienced abuse in the last 12 months were significantly *less* likely than others to agree (75%). Among the small number of *Indigenous* respondents the percentage saying that they would be confident about going to the Police was relatively low (57%).

### Personal concern about violence

Half the respondents *disagreed* with the statement, '*Possible anti-gay/anti-lesbian harassment or violence is not much of a worry for me personally*'. There was little significant difference in the attitudes expressed by gender, sexuality or age group. However, those who had experienced abuse in the last 12 months were significantly more likely than others to *disagree* with this statement (61%).

### Feeling safe in the area where you live

Two-thirds of respondents (67%) agreed with the proposition '*I feel pretty safe in the area where I live.*'

In terms of region it was interesting to note that a relatively high 70% of *inner Sydney* residents felt safe in their own area – despite the fact that, as later sections of the report indicate, the reported incidence of abuse was relatively high in this region<sup>5</sup>. The overall result for people living *outside* Sydney was 65%. The lowest levels of agreement with this proposition, geographically speaking, were in the Hunter/Central Coast region (60%) and in the Illawarra (59%).

The level of agreement with this proposition was 73% among lesbian respondents and 62% among gay men. In terms of age the two groups which *least* felt safe in their area of residence were the *youngest* (16-19 years – 52%) and the *oldest* (50 or over – 46%).

As with various other issues covered by the questionnaire, those who had experienced abuse in the past year felt less secure: within this group only 58% agreed with the statement. The level of agreement was lower again among those who had suffered a *physical injury* in the past year (44%).

## 5.3 Summary

- Forty-six per cent of lesbian respondents said that they generally felt *less safe than other women*. The percentage of gay men who felt *less safe than other men* was yet higher, at 65%. Among both gay men and lesbians, the two age groups which felt least safe (relative to other women and men) were those aged 20-29 and those aged 50 or over. The percentages who felt *less safe* were higher among those who had experienced homophobic abuse in the past year.
- Just over 80% of respondents (somewhat more in Sydney than in other parts of the State) stated that they were 'pretty open' about their sexuality. However, 56% said that lesbians, gay men and bisexuals were generally safer if they hid their sexual preference. Three-quarters of the respondents said that there were various things that they did, or refrained from doing, for fear of possible homophobic harassment.
- Sixty-nine per cent said they felt vulnerable to violence or harassment from strangers (74% in inner Sydney, 63% outside Sydney). Nineteen per cent felt vulnerable to violence or harassment from people they knew.
- Two-thirds of respondents said that they felt 'pretty safe' in the area where they lived; 70% of inner Sydney respondents and 65% of those living *outside* Sydney agreed with this proportion.
- Just on 80% said they would feel confident about reporting abuse to the Police if they thought it serious enough.

<sup>5</sup> This apparent paradox presumably reflects the fact (commented on by some of the focus group participants) that many gay men and lesbians tend to identify with and feel comfortable in inner areas of Sydney, which they see as socially more diverse and tolerant. On the other hand the numbers and visibility of gay men and lesbians in the inner suburbs also tend to attract homophobic people and behaviours.

## 6 Homophobic abuse

### 6.1 Incidence of abuse

#### 6.1.1 Incidence of various types of abuse

The questionnaire gave respondents a list of eight possible forms of homophobic harassment or violence, and asked whether they had experienced any of these *in the past 12 months* (Q8(a)), and *ever* (Q8(b)). Responses are summarised in Table 6.1.

**Table 6.1: Experience of Various Types of Abuse (Multiple Response)**

Form of Abuse	Experienced in last 12 months	Ever experienced
Written threats or abuse/hate mail	5%	22%
Verbal abuse	48%	82%
Harassment such as spitting, offensive gestures, being followed etc	24%	61%
Threatened/attempted physical attack or assault	10%	41%
Physical assault or attack without a weapon	4%	25%
Physical assault or attack with a weapon	2%	11%
Sexual assault	1%	11%
Property damage/vandalism/theft	7%	23%

A total of 336 respondents (56%) indicated that they had experienced some form of homophobic abuse in the past year<sup>6</sup>. Twenty-one per cent stated that in the past year they had *not experienced any* of the types of abuse listed in Q8(a), while 23% left (Q8(a)) blank.

The 'Ever experienced' figures presented in Table 6.1 are based on a joint analysis of responses to Q8(a) and Q8(b), to ensure completeness and to avoid any double-counting in cases where respondents circled the same item (eg *Verbal abuse*) in both 8(a) and 8(b).

In total, 15% of respondents either *specified* that they had never experienced these types of abuse (12%) or gave no answers to any part of Q8. Thus *the total percentage of respondents who reported at some time experiencing one or more of these types of violence was 85%*.

<sup>6</sup> This total includes 20 respondents who did not specify any particular form of abuse in Q8(a), but who went on to answer Q8(c), Q9 and Q10.

### 6.1.2 Most common forms of homophobic abuse

- Both *in the last 12 months* and *'ever'*, the form of abuse most often reported was *verbal abuse* - experienced by just on half the respondents (48%) in the past year, and at some time by four out of five respondents (82%).
- Next in frequency came *harassment such as spitting, offensive gestures, being followed etc* – experienced by 24% of respondents in the past year, and at some time by 61%.
- Third most common was *threatened/attempted physical attack or assault* – experienced by 10% in the past year, and at some stage by 41% of respondents.
- Between 20% and 25% of respondents had at some time experienced physical assault/attack without a weapon (25%); property damage/vandalism/theft (23%); and written threats or abuse (22%).
- Eleven per cent reported having at some time experienced assault or attack with a weapon, and 11% reported having experienced a sexual assault.

### 6.1.3 Experience of gay men and lesbians

Relatively more gay men than lesbians reported experiencing abuse over the past year. For example 54% of gay men and 40% of lesbians reported *verbal abuse* during this period, while 13% of gay men and 5% of lesbians reported *threatened/attempted physical attack or assault*. Just over half the lesbian respondents, compared with some 40% of gay male respondents, reported no homophobic abuse in the past year.

There was a similar pattern in relation to abuse *'ever experienced'*. For example:

- 49% of gay men, and 32% of lesbians, reported having at some time experienced *threatened/attempted physical attack or assault*;
- 15% of gay men, and 6% of lesbians, reported having at some time experienced *physical attack with a weapon*;
- 13% of gay men, and 7% of lesbians, reported having at some time experienced a *sexual assault*;
- 28% of gay men, and 18% of lesbians, had at some time experienced *property damage/vandalism/theft*.

Overall, 88% of gay men and 82% of lesbians reported having at some time experienced one or more of the types of homophobic abuse covered by the questionnaire.

### 6.1.4 Bisexual respondents

In terms of abuse, harassment or violence *ever experienced*, the overall incidence of homophobic abuse reported by bisexual respondents (a relatively small sample) fell just below that reported by gay men, at 87%. In terms of the *past year*, the incidence of abuse reported by bisexual respondents (68%) was higher than that reported by gay men (61%).

### 6.1.5 Age

The percentage of respondents reporting various types of abuse *in the past year* tended to be highest among the *youngest* respondents – those aged between 16 and 19. For example 66% of respondents in this age group reported *verbal abuse*, 16% *written abuse/hate mail*, and 13% *physical assault without a weapon* – as against 48%, 5% and 4% respectively in the total sample.

In terms of abuse *ever* experienced, it was people in the *oldest* (50plus) age group who tended to report the highest incidence of various forms of abuse (for example, 36% reported *physical assault without a weapon*). However, relatively high incidence of abuse was again reported by the *youngest* respondents.

### 6.1.6 Place of residence

Experience of abuse in the past year was relatively common among the inner Sydney respondents; among these respondents, for example, 56% reported *verbal abuse*, 30% *harassment such as spitting, offensive gestures etc*, and 13% *attempted or threatened physical assault*. Incidence of various forms of abuse were also relatively high in the Hunter region – for example *verbal abuse* 50%, *harassment such as spitting etc* 27%. Overall, 59% of *Sydney* respondents and 52% *outside Sydney* reported some form of abuse in the past year.

The incidence of abuse in the past year tended to be below average for *other Sydney* suburbs (eg *verbal abuse* 34%).

### 6.1.7 Education

Overall levels of experiencing some abuse in the past year were virtually the same for respondents *with* and *without* a university education. However, in the relatively small (45 respondents) group who had *not completed secondary school*, a high 64% reported abuse in the past year.

It is interesting to note, also, that among respondents who were in employment, the highest incidence of abuse in the past year was among those in manual/trade jobs (64%).

### 6.1.8 Summary

On the evidence of these responses, therefore, the groups of people most likely to experience some form of homophobic abuse included gay men, young people, those living in inner Sydney, and possibly those with a lower level of education and/or working in blue collar occupations.

## 6.2 Experience of those abused in the Past 12 months

### 6.2.1 Frequency of abuse

The 336 respondents who had experienced some form of abuse or harassment in the past 12 months were asked *how many* such incidents they had experienced over that period. Most reported *multiple* incidents: only 18% reported *a single incident* of homophobic abuse in the past year. Twenty-four per cent reported two incidents, 29% reported between three and five incidents, 13% reported 6-10 incidents and 7% more than 10 incidents (9% failed to answer this question).

Next these respondents were asked a series of specific questions about their *most recent* experience – for example the location of the incident, the perpetrators, whether or not they had suffered physical injury and where (if anywhere) they went for assistance. The following sub-sections describe the responses to these questions.

### 6.2.2 Types of abuse

The form of abuse experienced in the *most recent incident* during the past year was as follows:

Verbal abuse	71%
Harassment such as spitting, offensive gestures, being followed etc	14%
Threatened/attempted physical attack or assault	9%
Physical assault/attack without a weapon	5%
Physical assault/attack with a weapon	3%
Property damage/vandalism/theft	3%
Written abuse/hate mail	2%
Sexual assault	1%

It will be seen that these descriptions of the *most recent* incident generally reflect the overall frequency of various types of abuse or violence as reported in section 6.1.2.

Just on 80% stated that their most recent experience of abuse had taken the form of a *one-off* incident, while 19% said that the experience had been *ongoing*. More lesbians (21%) than gay men (16%) described the experience as *ongoing*.

Respondents in the youngest (16-19) and oldest (50+) age groups were more likely than those in other age groups to describe their most recent experience of abuse as *ongoing*. The incidence of *ongoing* abuse was particularly high (54%) among respondents who personally knew the perpetrator(s).



### 6.2.3 Location

In terms of the most recent experience of abuse, the *locations* most commonly reported were:

At or near a gay/lesbian venue	23%
At respondent's home or nearby	17%
At or near respondent's place of work or study	13%
In the street (but not any of the above)	29%
Bus stop/railway station etc	5%
Pub/club etc (not gay or lesbian venue)	4%
Shops/shopping centre	4%

Relatively more lesbians (20%) than gay men (9%) identified *at/near place of work or study* as the location of the most recent abuse. On the other hand far more gay men (30%) than lesbians (12%) said that the abuse had occurred *at/near a gay/lesbian venue*.

A relatively high 29% of older respondents (age 50 or more over) reported that the most recent incident had occurred *at/near their home*. *At/near a gay/lesbian venue* was a more common location for those aged in their 20s and 30s than for other age groups.

Among 28 incidents in which the respondent had suffered a *physical injury* (see section 6.2.7 below), six had occurred *at home or nearby*, six *at/near a lesbian/gay venue*, four *at/near the respondent's place of work or study*, and six *in the street elsewhere*.

### 6.2.4 Description of the most recent incident

The incidents which respondents described ranged from verbal abuse shouted from passing vehicles or by people on the street to serious physical assault, vandalism, and acts of discrimination or abuse at school or in the workplace.

Respondents' descriptions of their most recent experience of abuse had certain common themes. For example, verbal abuse and/or offensive gestures from people in a passing vehicle was a common experience for both gays and lesbians; almost one third of the reports involved a passing vehicle. This seemed to be especially common in the Oxford Street and Darlinghurst Road areas of Sydney, and also in the vicinity of other gay venues or events.

*'(Abuse) from people in cars on Oxford Street, this is very common.'*

*'Constant threats and shouts from passing straights in cars around Darlinghurst/Oxford St/Hyde Park. Makes you not want to hold hands anymore with (your) boyfriend in these areas. Easier elsewhere.'*

Often the 'drive-by' abuse was said to be perpetrated by carloads of young men.

Reports of such abuse sometimes involved missiles such as eggs – for example respondents being hit by eggs thrown from passing cars or apartment buildings. This suggests that the abuse is often planned to some degree – although not necessarily aimed at a particular individual.

*'I was with a group of lesbians walking down the street (Broadway) going home after being at a gay club, and people in a passing car threw eggs at us – and got us with them. They yelled at us too.'*

Another frequently reported scenario (around 15% of comments) involved verbal abuse or threatening behaviour from passers by on the street or in public places:

*'Spruikers outside a strip joint harassing me – following me down the street.'*

*'A male approached me and two friends saying we were 'faggots' and he just 'loved' our kind while making throat cutting actions.'*

*'It's just the usual – a bunch of guys will walk past and call me a fag or a poof. Mostly it's just so they can look good in front of their mates...'*

*Three males and two females started call us fucking faggots and that we deserved to be killed.*

*'A passing woman commented on the lack of father in our lesbian family. It wasn't full-on abuse but it ruined my day.'*

*'Whilst walking through a local shopping centre with a friend we were continually harassed by other shoppers. One group of male shoppers in their late teens followed us through the shopping centre yelling abuse and spitting on and at us...'*

Examples of harassment at places of work or study included abuse of health and community workers by their clients, verbal abuse at school or college, defamatory remarks/discrimination and socially excluding practices at work.

*'At tech groups of young men frequently yell 'Lesbian! Dyke!' as I walk between lunch and classroom.'*

*'There is just generally a lot of anti-gay/ lesbian rhetoric where I work in common places like the lunchroom that I find very offensive.'*

*'I was repeatedly the subject of both professional slander and personal/sexual vilification from colleagues in the workplace...'*

*'I am concerned about the unacceptable high level of homophobia being played out every single day my son attends high school. He hasn't decided his sexuality yet. He is only twelve. But because he has long hair he is constantly labelled as a 'poofster' or a 'faggot'...it starts so young and the schools are doing nothing about this...'*

Other themes included property damage (eg *Car was vandalised while using a known gay nude beach, car was scratched down the side with a coin*), and harassment and physical abuse near the home:

*'My neighbour told me to fuck off and rubbed his crotch up and down vigorously and called me a man hater.'*

*'As I got out of a taxi to enter my apartment building a guy threatened to kill me because I was gay.'*

*'I was attacked outside my home at 2am by guys, attempted mugging but also homophobic abuse, I was punched in the chest and threatened with a tyre lever.'*

Malicious behaviour such as nuisance telephone calls, distributing respondents' phone numbers to business mailing lists, and repeated SMS messages were also described by numbers of respondents.

While physical assault was not as frequently reported as verbal abuse or threatening gestures and the like, several such assaults were described as occurring in known gay neighbourhoods when respondents were walking home from a night out:

*'Bashing by a group of six guys when walking home down King Street Newtown at 11pm on a Saturday night.'*

*'Punched in the head and abused for being homosexual by a ... man in his early 20s, about eight other people there with him (male and female) – all did nothing to stop the attack.'*

*'Lebanese guys were driving their car and yelling at my friends and I 'poofs' ... saying Lebanese is based on the fact that I understand and talk fluent Arabic ....'*

Other examples of abuse included:

*'Shopping in Big W was called a poofter by one of the workers.'*

*'At a No War rally boys made obscene comments about me and my partner.'*

*'Bouncer at a gay venue yelling homophobic abuse at those entering.'*

Respondents did not necessarily record the *location* of the abuse. However, it appears that in areas *outside* Sydney abuse most often occurred near the centre of town, whereas in Sydney abuse frequently occurred in areas known to have a high proportion of gay residents and visitors, such as Darlinghurst and Newtown.

### **6.2.5 Alone or with others?**

Overall, 34% of respondents were alone at the time of the most recent incident, while 45% had been with one other person (often a partner, it appeared), and 20% had been in a group.

Abuse of lesbians and of bisexual people was particularly common when the respondent was with one other person (55% and 56% respectively). Attacks on gay men, however, were about equally likely to have occurred when they were alone (37%) or with one companion (40%).

### 6.2.6 Contributing factors other than sexuality

The respondents were asked whether or not they saw various factors *other than* (perceived) sexuality as contributing to the abuse they had experienced. The other factors most frequently reported were *gender* and *clothing or appearance/presentation* (both 33%). Gender was mentioned by 51% of lesbians and 52% of bisexual respondents. Gay men tended either to identify no other contributing factor (46%) or to refer to *clothing/personal appearance/presentation* (32%).

Only 17 respondents (5%) saw *race/ethnicity* as a contributing factor – 13 Caucasians, one of the three respondents of Torres Strait or Pacific Island background, and three of the seven people of Asian/Middle Eastern/Other background.

Some respondents specified contributing factors other than those listed in the questionnaire – for example *locality*:

*‘Unfortunately due to the high number of gay/lesbian people who live in the Newtown area, young hoodlums are increasingly cruising the area looking for gay/lesbian people to harass. Erskineville Road has now become a very dangerous road at night. This was traditionally a safe place for us to be.’*

### 6.2.7 Physical injury

Of the 336 respondents who had experienced abuse in the past year, 12 people (4%) said that they had suffered *serious* physical injury, and 16 people (5%) that they had suffered a *minor* physical injury. More of the gay men (10%) than of the lesbian respondents (3%) reported being physically injured. In terms of age, physical injury was most often reported by the youngest respondents, those aged 16-19 (20%).

### 6.2.8 Help from friends, family or community

Respondents were asked whether they had sought help (during or after the most recent incident) from ‘informal’ sources such as a partner, friend, family/relatives, neighbours or a passer-by. Most of respondents (65%) did *not* report having sought such help. However, 18% had sought help or support from a friend, and 14% from their partner.

More of the gay men (69%) than lesbians (62%) had *not sought* any help of this kind. The likelihood of seeking such assistance tended to increase with age.

Those who suffered a physical injury were the most likely to have sought some help of this kind (21 out of 28 people, or 75%) – mostly from friends, partners or passers by. The incidence of this kind of help-seeking was also relatively high among those who *knew* the perpetrator(s).

## 6.2.9 Profile of the perpetrators

### Number of Perpetrators

Among the 336 respondents who had experienced abuse in the past 12 months, 26% said there had been *one* perpetrator involved in the most recent incident; 40% said the number of perpetrators was *two or three*, while 25% said *four or more* perpetrators were involved. Nine per cent were either *not sure* or did not answer this question.

For respondents in the 16-19 age group, abuse by *one* perpetrator was the most common situation; in other age groups *two or three* perpetrators was most common. Among the 28 respondents who had suffered physical injury, approximately equal numbers said there had been *one* perpetrator, *two or three* perpetrators, or *four or more*.

### Gender

In the great majority of cases (77%), perpetrators were identified as male only. Five per cent of all respondents, and 9% of lesbians, reported *female only* perpetrators. Eleven per cent said that the perpetrators included *both* males and females. Respondents in *inner Sydney* suburbs were significantly more likely than others to report male only perpetrators (83%). Respondents outside Sydney were significantly more likely than those *in* Sydney to report that incidents had involved both male and female perpetrators.

Where the perpetrator(s) was/were *known* to the respondents (48 cases), perpetrator gender was *male only* in 63% of cases, *female only* in 19%, and *both male and female* in 19%. By contrast, 85% of perpetrators *not known* to the respondent were identified as *male only*.

Among those respondents who had suffered physical injury, 64% identified the perpetrator(s) as *male only*, 11% as *female only*, and 21% as *both male and female*.

### Age of perpetrators

The most frequently reported age group of perpetrators was 20-29 (52% of respondents). This was the most frequently reported age of perpetrators for lesbians, gay men and bisexual people, and for all age groups *except* 16-19 year olds - 64% of whom reported perpetrators of a *similar age to themselves*.

For both *inner Sydney* and *other Sydney* respondents, 20-29 was the most common perpetrator age group; in various country areas the most common age group was either 20-29 or, in some cases, 16-19. Just over 60% of those who suffered physical injury identified the perpetrator age group as 20-29.

### Relationship of perpetrator to respondent

The majority of respondents (76%) did not know the perpetrator(s) at all. Fourteen per cent said that they knew the perpetrator(s) *personally*, while another 8% said they knew them by sight, knew where they came from and the like.

Small percentages of respondents described the perpetrator's relationship with them as:

- casual acquaintance – 4%
- fellow student (own school or other) – 4%
- co-worker – 3%
- client/customer/patient etc – 3%
- neighbour – 2%
- relative – 1%

The percentage of respondents who knew (or knew of) the perpetrators was higher among respondents *outside* Sydney (39%) than among those living *in* Sydney (13%).

The percentage of respondents who knew the perpetrator(s) personally was high in several non-metropolitan areas – for example 46% in the Blue Mountains and in Southern NSW (though it needs to be borne in mind that these subsamples are small).

The percentage of respondents who did not know the perpetrator(s) was higher among gay men (81%) than among lesbians (68%). Twenty per cent of lesbians and 10% of gay men said they knew the perpetrator(s) personally, while 9% and 7% respectively said that they knew them by sight etc. In terms of *age group*, a high 40% of respondents aged 16-19 knew the perpetrator(s) personally.

The percentage of respondents who knew (or knew of) the perpetrator(s) was *lower* among those with university education and those in professional/managerial occupations than for the respondents overall.

Among those who suffered physical injury, *nearly half* knew the perpetrator(s) either personally or by sight etc. Five identified the perpetrator as a fellow student, three as a casual acquaintance, one as a neighbour and one as a client.

### Influence of drugs and alcohol

Twenty-three per cent of respondents believed that the perpetrator(s) was/were under the influence of alcohol or other drugs at the time of the incident; 38% thought this was not the case, while 37% were not sure.

### 6.3 Summary

- Fifty-six per cent of the respondents reported having experienced one or more forms of homophobic abuse, harassment or violence *in the past 12 months*. Eighty-five per cent had *at some time* experienced such abuse, harassment or violence.
- The three most common types of abuse experienced, both *in the past 12 months* and *ever*, were:
  - verbal abuse (experienced in the past year by 48%)
  - harassment such as spitting, offensive gestures, being followed etc (experienced in the past year by 24%); and
  - threatened or attempted physical attack/assault (experienced by 10% in the past year).
  - Other respondents reported experiencing property damage/vandalism/theft; written threats or abuse/hate mail; physical attack with or without a weapon; and sexual assault.
- Relatively more gay men (61%) than lesbians (47%) reported experiencing homophobic abuse *in the past 12 months*. Eighty-two per cent of lesbians, and 88% of gay men, reported having *at some time* experienced abuse of the kind covered by the survey questionnaire. Among bisexual respondents (a relatively small sample), 87% reported having *at some time* experienced homophobic abuse or violence, while 68% said they had experienced homophobic abuse or violence in the past year.
- A relatively high incidence of various types of abuse in the past year was reported by respondents *aged 16-19*. Overall, the incidence of abuse in the past year tended to be higher than average among people living in *inner Sydney*.
- Among those who had experienced abuse, harassment or violence in the past year, around three-quarters reported experiencing two or more such incidents.
- When respondents who had experienced abuse in the past year were asked specifically about their *most* recent experience, their answers revealed that:
  - the most common locations of abuse/harassment/violence were *at or near gay/lesbian venues* (23%), *at/near home* (17%), *at/near work or place of study* (13%), or *elsewhere in the street* (29%);
  - 34% of respondents had been alone at the time of the incident, while 45% had been with one other person, and 20% in a group;
  - *gender* and *clothing/appearance/personal presentation* were the factors (apart from sexuality) which respondents most often thought may have contributed to the abuse;
  - 28 respondents (8% of those experiencing abuse in the past year) had suffered a *physical injury*;
  - 69% of gay men and 62% of lesbians had not sought help from others such as friends or family, partner or passers by;
  - however, three out of four of those suffering a physical injury had sought assistance of this kind.

- Respondents with experience of abuse in the past year provided the following information on the perpetrator(s) involved in the most recent incident:
  - most incidents of abuse involved two or more perpetrators;
  - in most cases (and especially in inner Sydney) the perpetrators were male;
  - the most common perpetrator age group was 20-29 – though respondents who were aged 16 to 19 mostly reported abuse by perpetrators in their own age group;
  - in three out of four cases the perpetrators were unknown to the respondents; however 14% of respondents knew the perpetrator(s) personally, and 8% knew them by sight or knew where they were from;
  - *nearly half* of the respondents who had suffered physical injury either knew the perpetrators personally or knew who they were;
  - more lesbians than gay men knew the perpetrators, and more people *outside* Sydney than *in* Sydney knew the perpetrator(s);
  - around one in four respondents believed that the perpetrators were affected by alcohol or other drugs.



## 7 Experience of accessing various sources of assistance

This section discusses the experience of those respondents who had been abused in the last 12 months in accessing organisational/institutional sources of assistance.

### 7.1 Seeking assistance

In relation to the most recent incident experienced, these 336 respondents were asked: *Did you report that matter to, or seek assistance or advice from, any of the following (please circle all that apply)?*

- The Police
- Police Gay and Lesbian Liaison Officers (GLLOs)
- A work related support service (eg complaints officer at work, Human Resources, etc)
- Lawyer/Community Legal Service
- Victims of Crime Bureau
- Victims Compensation Tribunal
- Victims Support Line
- WorkCover
- Hospital, clinic or Community Health Centre
- Counsellor/psychologist/social worker
- Anti-Discrimination Board
- The Lesbian and Gay Anti-Violence Project (Sydney)
- ACON – city or regional branches
- Gay and Lesbian Counselling Service
- Other gay or lesbian organisation, support group, help line etc
- Mainstream support group, help line etc (not specifically gay or lesbian)
- Other Organisation, service or institution (please specify)

Thirteen per cent of the respondents said they had reported the most recent incident to *the Police*, while 7% had consulted a *counsellor/psychologist/social worker*; small numbers had sought assistance from various other sources. Overall, however, 74% of respondents *had not reported the incident to, or sought help from, any of these people or agencies*. This percentage was similar for lesbians, gay men and bisexual people. In terms of age it was highest (84%) among respondents aged 16-19, and lowest (63%) among those aged 50 or over.

The relatively low percentage of respondents who said they had reported the incident to or sought assistance from these service providers is probably due in part to the nature of much of the abuse – that is, verbal abuse, offensive gestures and the like from people unknown and often unidentifiable. The percentage of respondents

who had sought assistance from one or more of these sources was relatively high (50%-60%) among those who *knew the perpetrator(s)* of the most recent incident either personally or by sight etc.

Among the 28 people who reported sustaining a *physical injury* in the most recent incident:

- 15 had gone to the Police
- 3 had sought assistance from Police Gay and Lesbian Liaison Officers
- 5 had reported the matter to the Lesbian and Gay Anti-Violence Project
- 6 had reported it to a gay/lesbian organisation such as the Gay and Lesbian Counselling Service
- 4 had gone to a hospital or clinic etc
- 2 had seen a counsellor/psychologist/social worker
- 1 had contacted a lawyer
- 1 had contacted the Victims of Crime Bureau
- 3 had sought assistance elsewhere
- 9 had not sought any such assistance<sup>7</sup>.

The overall percentage of people seeking some assistance from a service provider was a little higher *outside* Sydney than *in* Sydney.

## 7.2 Level of agency support or co-operation

The 86 respondents who *had* approached one or more of service providers mentioned in section 7.1 were asked *how supportive or co-operative* they had found the provider in this instance.

Most services were described by the small numbers of respondents who had used them as either *very supportive* or *reasonably supportive*. The percentages of respondents who described various service providers as either *very* or *reasonably* supportive/co-operative included the following:

- Police: 60% of users said *supportive/co-operative*
- GLLOs: 62%
- A work-related service: 73%
- Hospital, clinic etc: 100%
- Counsellor/psychologist/social worker: 95%
- Lesbian and Gay Anti-Violence Project: 100%

It needs to be re-iterated that the numbers of respondents who were in a position to comment on any given service were quite small.

The one person who had approached the Victims of Crime Bureau described it as *not supportive*.

<sup>7</sup> Multiple responses possible.

### 7.3 Value of advice or service given

Those who had approached one or more of these agencies for assistance were then asked *how valuable* the service or advice given to them had been. In this case the responses varied considerably by service provider. Percentages of respondents who described the service or advice that they received as *not valuable* included:

- 53% of those who had approached a work-related support service
- 48% of those who had gone to the Police
- 23% of those who had approached a GLLO
- 14% of those who had consulted a counsellor/psychologist/social worker.

Again it needs to be remembered that we are only talking about *small numbers* of respondents who had used a given agency.

The one respondent who had sought assistance from the Victims of Crime Bureau judged the service received to be *not valuable*.

### 7.4 Comments on services used or not used

Comments made about services that people had used included the following:

*'We were too rattled to note the licence number but gave a description etc quickly using a mobile phone. We did not feel that this particularly needed the attention of the GL liaison officer.'*

*'Police supportive. We gave them registration and they told us they would follow it up. However, there was no way of knowing if this actually happened, so it is difficult to say anything about satisfaction with the service.'*

*'I wouldn't bother reporting homophobic verbal abuse unless it was harassment in the workplace. But if I was a victim of physical abuse (for any reason), I would report it to the Police.'*

*'Although with this particular incident it wasn't reported to any organisation, in the past I have reported incidents to Police who I found unhelpful as I was unaware at the time of Gay and Lesbian Liaison Officers and I wasn't referred to one. I have my own counsellor who doesn't work for a GLBT organisation and who isn't GLBT herself and she is extremely supportive and understanding of me. I also have found that ACON and PFLAG<sup>8</sup> to be very helpful and supportive.'*

Comments about services *not* used included the following:

*Police – 'I felt I would be given an unsympathetic audience and that nothing would be done.'*  
*Others – 'I did not consider them relevant.'*

*Police – 'I felt the matter was of a passer-by nature and that there was little that could be done.'*

*The Police and the Lesbian and Gay Anti-Violence Project (Sydney) – 'Circumstance so commonplace not serious enough to warrant justification.'*

<sup>8</sup> Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays.

*GLLO – 'I was advised against using this service in this incident as it would have been more involved than necessary....'*

*'Usually it's a waste of time - the Police do nothing! It is more a matter of education that the government is not doing much about it. Meanwhile I'll keep feeling unsafe even in places such as Oxford St & Newtown!'*

*Police - 'I have found them to be relatively homophobic/especially in the inner western suburbs of Sydney.'*

*All of the above 'Verbal abuse is so common there is not much done about it, and is a sad fact of life if you're gay.'*

*'I would not waste my time by subjecting myself to further abuse, by speaking to the Police. They are far too ineffectual, corrupt, ignorant, homophobic, uneducated, and abusive.'*

*Police and other services – 'With my recent growing awareness of issues relating to AVP<sup>9</sup> etc, I am much more likely to report violence against myself and/or people around me. On the occasion as described above, I did not go out of my way to contact Police. Had there been physical threats I would have contacted Police immediately. If Police or similar authority had been visible on or near Oxford Street at the time, I would have spoken to the officers. I generally do not feel threatened by Police.'*

Numbers of respondents made no comment on why they did or did not use particular services; those who did primarily referred to the Police, Police GLLOs and the Anti Violence Project.

## 7.5 Summary

- Of the 336 respondents who reported experiencing abuse in the past 12 months, three-quarters had not reported the most recent incident to, or sought assistance from, services such as the Police, a hospital or clinic, victim support services, counsellors, or gay/lesbian community organisations. However, 13% had reported the matter to the Police and 7% had consulted a counsellor/psychologist/social worker, and smaller numbers had sought help from various other agencies.
- The percentage of respondents who had *not* sought any assistance from such agencies was particularly high among the *youngest* respondents (age group 16-19).
- Respondents were much more likely to have sought such assistance if they suffered physical injury – and also if they *knew* the perpetrator(s).
- Respondents who had gone to an official or professional service provider of this kind had generally found it at least *reasonably* supportive or co-operative. There were some respondents, however, who described *the Police, GLLOs, lawyers and employment-related support services* as *not* supportive/co-operative.
- Around half of those who had gone to a *work-related support service* or to *the Police* described the advice or service they received *not valuable*.

<sup>9</sup> Lesbian and Gay Anti Violence Project.

## 8 Effects of Homophobic Abuse

### 8.1 Effects on lesbian, gay and bisexual respondents

All respondents were asked the following question: *Thinking specifically about anti gay/anti lesbian abuse or violence – have experiences or concerns about that sort of abuse or violence ever had any of the following effects on you?*

Table 8.1 summarises the responses, in order of frequency for all respondents, and separately for lesbians, gay men and bisexuals. (The question allowed for multiple answers.)

**Table 8.1: Effects of Homophobic Abuse or Violence on Respondents X Sexuality**

Types of Effect	All Respondents	Lesbians	Gay Men	Bisexuals
Made you modify your behaviour (eg dress differently, avoid showing affection for a partner in public)	66%	74%	60%	68%
Made you feel worried, stressed or anxious	50%	45%	53%	59%
Made you decide to hide/keep hiding your sexuality	32%	31%	32%	49%
Made you feel bad or sad about your sexuality	30%	24%	34%	32%
Made you depressed	28%	20%	32%	35%
Had a negative effect on your friendships/relationships	26%	25%	24%	49%
Made you generally less likely to go out/go to public places/socialise	22%	18%	24%	22%
Made you less likely to go to places used by lesbians and gay men	17%	10%	22%	27%
Led you to seek counselling	15%	12%	16%	24%
Led to problems sleeping or getting to sleep	15%	11%	15%	27%
Led to increased alcohol or drug consumption	11%	9%	12%	14%
Led you to take time off work	8%	7%	8%	14%
Led to use or increased use of prescription drugs	6%	6%	6%	5%

As Table 8.1 shows, half or more of the respondents reported that concerns or experience relating to homophobic abuse had led them to *modify their behaviour* (for example dressing differently, or refraining from expressing affection in public), and/or had made them feel *worried, abused or anxious*. *Concealment* of one's

sexuality was another common impact, as was feeling *bad or sad* about one's sexuality, *depression*, *negative effects on friendships or relationships*, and decreased inclination to *go out or socialise*.

Only 13% of the respondents (5% of bisexuals, 12% of lesbians and 15% of gay men) did not report at least one of the impacts listed in Table 8.1.

As Table 8.1 shows, there was a tendency for gay men and (in particular) bisexual respondents to report such impacts more frequently than lesbian respondents. The main exception was in relation to *modification of behaviour*, which was reported by 74% of lesbians, 68% of bisexuals and 60% of gay men.

Respondents who had experienced abuse in the past 12 months were generally more likely than others to report the various impacts listed in Table 8.1.

*Sydney* respondents and those living *outside Sydney* gave broadly similar responses in terms of the effects on them of homophobic abuse. The pattern of responses was also broadly similar for those with, and without, university education.

## 8.2 Effects by age group

Table 8.2 summarises the responses by age group. It shows that most of these impacts were most frequently reported by the *youngest* respondents – those aged 16-19. For example 59% of respondents aged 16-19, as against 28% overall, reported feeling *depressed* as a result of experience or concerns relating to homophobic abuse.

Only 6% of respondents aged 16-19 did not report experiencing at least one of these impacts.

**Table 8.2: Effects of Homophobic Abuse or Violence on Respondents X Age**

Types of Effect	All Respondents	Age Group				
		16-19	20-29	30-39	40-49	50+
Made you modify your behaviour (eg dress differently, avoid showing affection for a partner in public)	66%	63%	62%	72%	68%	52%
Made you feel worried, stressed or anxious	50%	72%	52%	48%	45%	53%
Made you decide to hide/keep hiding your sexuality	32%	50%	30%	33%	29%	33%
Made you feel bad or sad about your sexuality	30%	50%	34%	29%	23%	33%
Made you depressed	28%	59%	30%	23%	20%	36%
Had a negative effect on your friendships/relationships	26%	38%	31%	23%	23%	28%
Made you generally less likely to go out/go to public places/socialise	22%	28%	19%	23%	23%	17%
Made you less likely to go to places used by lesbians and gay men	17%	22%	11%	17%	22%	16%
Led you to seek counselling	15%	25%	15%	12%	15%	19%
Led to problems sleeping or getting to sleep	15%	25%	19%	14%	10%	14%
Led to increased alcohol or drug consumption	11%	13%	16%	10%	10%	7%
Led you to take time off work	8%	16%	7%	7%	10%	9%
Led to use or increased use of prescription drugs	6%	3%	8%	7%	7%	3%

### 8.3 Respondents' Comments

Comments made by respondents on the effects of their concerns or experiences of homophobic abuse included the following:

*'Made me self censor – constantly monitoring the degree to which I 'come out'.'*

*'Acting differently when away from the typically gay areas, for example the western suburbs or the country.'*

*'I have lived as an open gay/queer man for many years. However whenever in public I always feel the need to be aware of whether it is safe to show affection to my partner and from time to time hide my sexual preference as I feel unsafe to do otherwise.'*

*'I am very tense when walking home from a venue. I sometimes run.'*

*'Basically I tend to avoid going to places that are 'overtly hetero' because I just feel uncomfortable in such places.'*

*'I don't go to the two local hotels and I definitely have modified my behaviour since moving to the country....'*

*'I am just generally careful and keep my eyes about me. I know the streets are unsafe but as a matter of principle I am not going to live my life in fear. Basically I live my life openly and walk where and when I want to, even at night. However I am aware that I could be unlucky one day and in that situation I'll be on my own....'*

### 8.4 Summary

- Two-thirds of respondents reported that experience of or concerns about homophobic abuse had *led them to modify their behaviour* in various ways. Half said that such experience or concerns made them *feel worried, stressed or anxious*. Other impacts of homophobic abuse included depression, hiding or feeling bad about one's sexuality, negative effects on friendships and relationships, and being discouraged from going out or socialising.
- Seventy-four per cent of lesbians, 68% of bisexuals and 60% of gay men reported changing their behaviour as an effect of homophobic abuse. Most other impacts, however, were reported more frequently by bisexual and gay male respondents than by lesbians.
- The various impacts of homophobic abuse tended to be more frequently reported by respondents who had had experience of such abuse in the past year.
- In terms of age, most of these adverse impacts were most frequently reported by the *youngest* respondents (16-19 years).



## 9 Some comparisons with earlier research

### 9.1 The 1994 *Out of the Blue* Survey

The current survey differed in some significant ways from the *Out of the Blue* survey conducted for the NSW Police Service in 1994/1995. For example the 2003 sample was considerably larger (600 respondents compared with 259), and in 2003 the respondents came from across NSW rather than from Sydney. Nevertheless there are similarities – as well as some differences – between the 1994 and 2003 findings.

- The proportions of gay men and of lesbians participating in the survey research were similar in this years survey (50% gay men and 42% lesbians) and 1994 (47% and 40% respectively). The age profiles of respondents to the two surveys were also broadly similar.
- The percentage of all respondents who had experienced some form of abuse in the previous 12 months was almost identical in the two surveys – 56% in 2003 and 57% in 1994. In 1994, however, the experience of abuse in the past year was much the same for lesbians and gay men, whereas in the 2003 survey more gay men (61%) than lesbians (47%) had experienced abuse over that period.
- In both surveys, *verbal abuse* was the most common form of abuse/harassment/violence reported.
- *Multiple* experiences of abuse in the past 12 months were commonly reported in both surveys.
- In both surveys the perpetrator(s) were most often described as male, and mostly there was more than one perpetrator. The percentage of respondents who *did not know* the perpetrator(s) was 76% in 2003 and 77% in 1994. In both cases lesbians were more likely than gay men to know the perpetrator(s).
- Among those who had experienced abuse in the past year, 13% of the 2003 respondents and 18% of the 1994 respondents had reported it to the Police. In both surveys such reporting was more common where the respondent *knew* the perpetrator(s).
- Experience of abuse in the past 12 months was in both surveys associated with higher levels of fear or concern.
- Seventy-six per cent of the 2003 respondents (61% in 1994) reported modifying their behaviour in certain ways out of concern about abuse or harassment.

### 9.2 Other Australian and overseas research

The broad findings of this survey are generally consistent with the results of other Australian studies in this field. Whilst methodological differences between the present study and previous surveys limit the direct comparisons that can be made, it is possible, for example, to compare these survey results on overall experiences of hostility and violence with the results of a 1994 Victorian survey of 1002 lesbians and gay men (GLAD 1994: 18).

- That Victorian survey found that 70% of lesbians and 64% of gay men reported experiencing verbal abuse in public at some point during their lives. In the present survey, 82% of respondents reported that they had experienced homophobic verbal abuse, in any location, at some point in time.
- In the 1994 Victorian survey, 36% of lesbians and 39% of gay men reported being threatened with violence in a public place on the basis of their sexuality, at some point during their lives. In the present survey, 41% of respondents reported a threatened or attempted physical attack or assault at some point, in any location, on the basis of their sexuality.

- In the Victorian survey 11% of lesbians and 20% of gay men reported that they had experienced physical violence in a public place on the basis of their sexuality at some point. In the present survey, 25% of respondents reported a homophobic physical assault or attack without a weapon and 11% reported a physical assault or attack with a weapon, in any location, at some time. A further 11% of the current NSW respondents reported an experience of sexual assault. Although the present survey found somewhat higher levels of physical violence than the 1994 Victorian survey, differences in the specific questions asked make it hard to know whether this represents a real difference between the States or across time. In particular, the present survey provided a much more detailed breakdown of the types of abuse experienced and did not limit the responses to public places.

There is also broad consistency between the findings of the present research and those of the Health in Men (HIM) cohort study currently being conducted by the National Centre for HIV Epidemiology and Clinical Research at the University of NSW, the Australian Federation of AIDS Organisations and ACON. This project is interviewing HIV negative men about their risk behaviours and sexual health, but includes a small number of questions about experiences of homophobic abuse. Baseline data from 2001-2002 indicates that:

- 53% of gay men had been verbally abused in public in the previous year due to their homosexuality
- one in seven had been physically threatened and one in ten actually physically assaulted
- around one in 12 had been refused service or denied a job due to their sexuality.<sup>10</sup>

In general terms, the findings of the current NSW survey are also broadly consistent with *international* research on homophobic hostility and violence experienced by gay men and lesbians in public places. In fact, it is notable that victimisation surveys undertaken on homophobic violence and hostility in several English-speaking countries have found generally comparable results in terms of levels and types of hostility reported.

Surveys conducted during the 1980s and 1990s in the United States, Canada, Great Britain, and New Zealand suggest, in approximate terms, that: 70-80% of lesbians and gay men have experienced verbal abuse in public at some point in their lives on the basis of their sexuality; 30-40% report threats of violence; 20% of gay men report physical violence; and 10-12% of lesbians report physical violence (Mason 2002: 39). Most of these surveys also record incidents where lesbians and gay men have been chased or followed, pelted with objects, spat upon, have had their property vandalised and, in the case of lesbians, have been sexually assaulted.

<sup>10</sup> Personal communication, Garrett Prestage, National Centre for HIV Epidemiology and Clinical Research, University of NSW, 17 October 2003.

## 10 Summary and Conclusions

### 10.1 Key findings

- The survey respondents reported high levels of homophobic abuse, harassment or violence, in various forms. These levels were broadly consistent with those reported in comparable research that has been conducted elsewhere, and very similar to the findings of the 1994/95 NSW survey *Out of the Blue*. Of the 600 respondents in the present survey, 56% reported having experienced one or more forms of homophobic abuse, harassment or violence during the past year. Eighty-five per cent had *at some time* in their lives experienced such abuse, harassment or violence.
- The three most common types of abuse experienced, both *in the past 12 months* and *ever*, were:
  - verbal abuse (experienced in the past year by 48% of respondents)
  - harassment such as spitting, offensive gestures, being followed etc (experienced in the past year by 24%); and
  - threatened or attempted physical attack/assault (experienced by 10% in the past year).

Other respondents reported experiencing property damage/vandalism/theft; written threats or abuse/hate mail; physical attack with or without a weapon; and sexual assault.
- Relatively more gay men than lesbians reported experiencing homophobic abuse *in the past 12 months* (and also *ever*). Just under half of the lesbian respondents (47%), and 61% of gay men, reported abuse in the past year. Among bisexual respondents (a relatively small sample), 87% reported having *at some time* experienced homophobic abuse or violence, while 68% said they had experienced this in the past year.
  - A relatively high incidence of various types of abuse in the past year was reported by respondents *aged 16-19*.
  - Overall, the incidence of abuse in the past year tended to be higher than average among people living in *inner Sydney*.
  - Among those who had experienced abuse, harassment or violence in the past year, around three-quarters reported experiencing *two or more* such incidents.
- Information relating to the *most recent* homophobic incident included the following:
  - the most common locations of abuse/harassment/violence were at or near gay/lesbian venues, at/near home, at/near work or place of study, or elsewhere in the street;
  - about one respondent in three had been alone at the time of the last incident, while 45% had been with one other person, and 20% in a group;
  - 8% of those experiencing abuse in the past year had suffered a *physical injury* in the most recent incident;
  - 69% of gay men and 62% of lesbians had not sought help from others such as friends or family, partner or passers by; however, three out of four of those suffering a *physical injury* sought assistance of this kind.

- As for the perpetrators of harassment or violence in the past year:
  - most incidents involved two or more perpetrators;
  - in most cases (and especially in inner Sydney) the perpetrators were male;
  - the most common perpetrator age group was 20-29 – though respondents who were aged 16 to 19 mostly reported abuse by perpetrators *in their own age group*;
  - in three out of four cases the perpetrators were *unknown to the respondents*; however 14% of respondents knew the perpetrator(s) personally, and 8% knew them by sight or knew where they were from;
  - nearly half of the respondents who had suffered physical injury either knew the perpetrators personally or knew who they were;
  - more lesbians than gay men knew the perpetrator(s), and more people *outside* Sydney than *in* Sydney knew them.
- Just on 80% of the survey respondents said they would feel confident about reporting abuse to the Police if they thought this was warranted. The focus groups suggested that most people would prefer to deal with a Gay and Lesbian Liaison Officer (GLLO) – though the numbers of GLLOs are limited.
- Among those experiencing abuse or violence in the past year, 13% had reported the most recent incident to the Police, 7% had consulted a counsellor/psychologist/social worker, and smaller numbers had sought help from various other agencies. Respondents were much more likely to have sought such assistance if they suffered physical injury – and also if they knew the perpetrator(s). The percentage of respondents who had not sought any assistance from such agencies was particularly high among the *youngest* respondents (age group 16-19).

Respondents who had gone to an official or professional service provider of this kind had generally found it at least reasonably supportive or co-operative. A number of respondents, however, described the Police, lawyers and employment-related support services as not supportive/co-operative. Around half of those who had gone to a *work-related* support service or to *the Police* described the advice or service they received as *not valuable*.

- Sixty-nine per cent of survey respondents felt vulnerable to violence or harassment from *strangers* (74% in inner Sydney, 63% outside Sydney). Nineteen per cent felt vulnerable to violence or harassment from *people they knew*.

- Experience and concerns relating to homophobic abuse and violence evidently have far-reaching effects on the way lesbians and gay men live. Among the survey respondents, for example, around three-quarters reported that concerns about abuse led them to modify their behaviour in various ways. The focus group discussions suggested that if anything this result understates the situation, and that there are numerous choices and decisions that lesbians and gay men make from day to day and year to year in order to try to reduce the risk of abuse. These may include decisions about clothing and personal appearance, whether to show signs of affection to a partner (eg holding hands), where to shop, where to go on holiday, which school to send your child to, where to live.

Half of the survey respondents reported that experience or concerns relating to abuse made them feel worried, stressed or anxious. Other impacts of homophobic abuse included depression, hiding or feeling bad about one's sexuality, negative effects on friendships and relationships, and being discouraged from going out or socialising.

The various impacts of homophobic abuse tended to be more frequently reported by respondents who had had experience of such abuse in the past year.

In terms of age, most of these adverse impacts were most frequently reported by the *youngest* respondents (16-19 years).

- The focus group discussions made it clear that beneath the survey results lie the varying experiences of different groups of gay men and lesbians. Asian gay men and Indigenous gay men and lesbians, for example, spoke about interconnecting patterns of homophobic and racist abuse – including racism encountered within the gay and lesbian communities. *Indigenous* gay men and lesbians spoke of homophobic abuse and violence experienced from other Indigenous people; some made the point that health and sex education resources designed for Indigenous people do not adequately address issues of sexuality and homophobia. They also said that Indigenous attitudes to gay and lesbian people varied from group to group, and suggested that 'Christianised' communities tended to be the most homophobic.

Lesbians and gay men of *Middle-Eastern* background (whether Christian or Muslim) indicated that for them the most severe experiences of homophobic abuse, harassment and violence tended to come from within their own families or communities – with lesbians typically facing even more difficult situations than gay men.

*Mature age* gay men and lesbians discussed two factors that tended to work in opposite directions. On the one hand some – especially women – tended to feel more vulnerable as they got older, and in due course frailer. On the other hand, the older people had to a large extent 'sorted out' their lives into patterns that they felt offered them a reasonable degree of safety and security. Further, older gays and lesbians tended to be 'invisible' – likely to be perceived by others *as older people* rather than as gay or lesbian, and therefore less at risk of homophobic abuse as such.

- Among the survey respondents, some 80% said that they were ‘pretty open’ about their sexuality. However, over half took the view that gay men and lesbians were generally safer if they *hid* their sexual orientation. People in the focus groups, too, often referred to a trade-off between being frank and open about your sexuality, and trying to protect yourself from abuse. This was a source of frustration and internal conflict. In the words of one young person: ‘You shouldn’t have to hide to be safe. But you have to be pragmatic’.

There was a common perception across the focus groups that those *most* likely to be abused or attacked were young gay men and lesbians, and especially those who could be seen as conforming to a gay or lesbian stereotype.

## 10.2 Conclusions

Taking the survey results and focus group findings together, key conclusions that can be drawn from this research include the following:

- Gay men and lesbians in NSW continue to experience high levels of homophobic abuse, harassment or violence. The percentage of the current survey respondents who had experienced some form of homophobic abuse in the past year (56%) was almost exactly the same as was found in the *Out of the Blue* survey.
- The *impacts* of homophobic violence and abuse are significant and affect lesbians and gay men in many and diverse ways, including stress and anxiety, depression, withdrawal from social situations and hiding of one’s sexuality. Many gay men and lesbians are – realistically – concerned about the prospect of abuse, harassment or violence, and this can affect their choices and decision-making in numerous large and small ways, from choice of clothing to decisions about careers and where to live.
- Those who took part in the focus group research tended to see *young* gay men and lesbians as especially vulnerable to homophobic abuse of various kinds, and the survey results confirmed that such abuse *was* a particularly significant issue for young people. For example, young gay men and lesbians (ages 16-19) who took part in the survey reported relatively high levels of various forms of abuse, and also a high incidence of negative impacts – such as anxiety or withdrawal, for example. Young people also reported *relatively little* use of government or non-government support services, including the Police.
- Many of the focus group participants referred to the key importance of *schools* in providing information about sexuality and homophobia, and in addressing the issue of homophobic abuse. In part this was because the school was itself the site of a lot of homophobic behaviour, but it also reflected the fact that for many young gays and lesbians the school was the place where they had the best chance of getting clear and accurate information.
- It was reassuring to find that nearly 80% of respondents said that they would be prepared to report homophobic abuse or violence to the Police if they thought this was warranted. This result indicates that over time there has been a significant change in the likelihood of gay men and lesbians being willing to ask Police for assistance. The focus groups made it clear that, within the Police Service, many people would prefer to deal with a Gay and Lesbian Liaison Officer (GLLO) – but also that there are only limited number of GLLOs available.

- The focus group research indicated that while numbers of people thought it important in principle that abuse should be reported, there were various reasons why they might hesitate to go to the Police. Apart from fears of insensitive or homophobic behaviour on the part of the Police, these included a belief that if the perpetrator was unknown there was little the Police could do; concern about getting caught up in an investigation process that could itself be unpleasant or distressing; fears by Indigenous people that the Police might see them as the guilty rather than the injured party; and fear that in involving the Police you would risk 'outing' yourself to your family or others.
- Participants in almost all of the focus groups – including some people who themselves had religious beliefs and affiliations – identified religious institutions and their adherents as a significant source of homophobic attitudes and behaviour.
- Both the survey and the focus group research highlighted the 'trade-offs' that lesbians and gay men may face between openness and safety. In general those who took part in the research felt likely to be at greater risk of abuse, harassment or violence if they were frank and open about their sexuality; concealment and denial however, carried their own negative consequences. It was also of interest that many of the focus group participants commented that areas widely seen as gay/lesbian friendly (notably Oxford Street, Darlinghurst) now attracted many heterosexual people, including perpetrators of homophobic abuse, harassment or violence.

### 10.3 The way forward

- The complex forms of hate related abuse and violence experienced by gay men and lesbians from Indigenous and culturally diverse backgrounds, in part based on homophobia but also racially motivated, suggest that responses may need to be specifically tailored to 'subgroups' within the broader gay and lesbian community. Gender and age are also important factors at play in the experience and response to homophobic abuse. Over the last 20 years or so, the majority of Government funded programs addressing homophobic violence have targeted or represented the 'gay and lesbian community' in the broader sense. This research suggests that more specific targeting of programs may be required.
- Similarly, strategies may need to be targeted towards specific situations of abuse and violence, such as the sites of violence. Schools were highlighted by all focus groups as critical areas of concern – because they appear to be key sites of homophobic abuse and violence and because they provide some of the best opportunities for information and education to young people about diverse sexualities, stereotyping, discrimination and homophobia.
- The success of early intervention strategies in the area of crime prevention is well documented. Early intervention strategies to prevent the development of abusive and violent behaviours directed against lesbians and gay men form the basis of much of the work that has been undertaken to date such as the anti-homophobia education campaigns conducted by the Lesbian and Gay Anti-Violence Project. The research suggests that this approach, in principle, should be maintained. However, evaluative research to determine which features of these programs are more likely to impact on attitudes and behaviours would inform the future development of effective early intervention strategies.
- The research suggests that young people are particularly vulnerable to the impact of homophobic abuse and violence, and less likely to seek help. Government funded programs may need to pay particular attention to supporting young people who are victimised, or who live in fear of abuse and violence.
- The results suggest that some of our efforts over the last decade in response to homophobic violence have been working – eight out of ten surveyed felt confident to report incidents to the Police and many participants in the survey and focus groups acknowledged their rights in relation to anti-discrimination laws and to access services, both mainstream and gay and lesbian community based. Ongoing information and education might be considered to support these successes by ensuring that lesbians and gay men are aware of their legislative rights and encouraged to access legal, justice, health and related services.





# *References*

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## References

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# Appendix A

## Methodology

## Introduction

The research brief was developed in consultation with the Network of Government Agencies: GLBT Issues (NOGA), convened by the CPD. Established in 2001, the NOGA commissioned this research to provide accurate and up to date information on homophobic violence throughout NSW to inform policy and practice in this area.

A Research Steering Committee was established comprising members from the NOGA (NSW AGD, Corrective Services, Community Services, Juvenile Justice, Ombudsman's Office, ACON's Lesbian and Gay Anti Violence Project and the Gay and Lesbian Rights Lobby). This committee provided guidance and direction for the study from the initial research brief through to reporting and publication of data.

In accordance with the research brief, the methodology involved four key components:

- Stage 1: consultation with the Steering Committee.
- Stage 2: conduct of a survey. This included advertising and distributing the survey as widely as possible to gay men and lesbians across NSW, utilising the assistance of an extensive range of community-based and government organisations which work with gay men and lesbians, and the gay and lesbian media.
- Stage 3: conduct of focus groups with gay men and lesbians.
- Stage 4: reporting.

### Stage 1: Meeting with the Steering Committee.

An initial meeting was held with the Steering Committee on 10 December 2002, to discuss the nature and scope of work and to decide on various matters relating to research methods and approach.

### Stage 2: Survey Research

This aspect of the research was undertaken between January and June 2003 and involved a number of steps:

- the survey questionnaire was designed and ready for distribution by March 12
- questionnaire distribution took place between March 1 and March 30
- most media advertising took place during March
- the stated closing date for the survey was May 12
- survey responses were in fact accepted until June 10 (to allow for late submissions and the process of returning copies from collection points).

## Development of the survey questionnaire

The survey instrument was developed by Urbis Keys Young in consultation with the Steering Committee. In drafting the questionnaire a number of previous survey questionnaires and research reports on homophobic violence were reviewed – in particular the *Out of the Blue* survey conducted for the NSW Police Service in 1994/95.

Given the nature of the survey, the final page of the questionnaire provided contact details for organisations which can offer support or assistance to people who have experienced abuse or violence.

The survey questionnaire is set out in Appendix B.

## Distribution of the questionnaire

Distributing the questionnaire and achieving an appropriate sample was a difficult task. For one thing there are, of course, no reliable figures on the number or distribution of people in NSW who identify as gay or lesbian.

A ‘snowballing’ approach was used as one means of distributing the survey; this relied on interested parties, organisations and individuals passing on information about the project through their own networks. It relied on the gay and lesbian communities’ goodwill, commitment and interest in the subject matter of this research.

Such an approach, however, can lead to over-representation of active sub-groups within the population. To achieve a good spread of respondents, therefore, and to reduce the likelihood of the process being ‘captured’ by particular sections of the target population, various other methods were used to increase the reach of the survey. These included:

- media advertising
- distribution through wide range of government and community-based organisations which come in contact with gay men and lesbians, as well as additional mainstream organisations
- use of the Internet.

Each of these approaches is discussed below.

## Media advertising

A series of media initiatives was undertaken during the survey distribution phase of the project. The project was promoted and advertised in the gay and lesbian press and regional newspapers. In light of a limited advertising budget, newspaper coverage was designed to maximise circulation, and also to overlap with areas in which focus groups might later be conducted.

### Media Releases

During the project the AGD issued two media releases, to coincide with the start-up and concluding phases of the survey. The first release was distributed on 4 March 2003 to the gay and lesbian press, the second on 6 May 2003 to the gay and lesbian press and the *Koori Mail*. There was editorial coverage in both the *Sydney Star Observer* and *Lesbians on the Loose* at each phase (see below).

### Advertising in the gay and lesbian media

At the commencement of the survey phase, advertisements were placed in a number of gay and lesbian publications. Editorial space was also requested at this time, and the media release was provided to the relevant papers; the second media release was also distributed to these gay media. Table A1 summarises this advertising.

**Table A1: Media Advertising in the Gay and Lesbian Press**

Press	Circulation	Advertisement dates & size	Editorial appeared
<i>The Sydney Star Observer Newspaper</i>	Highest circulation gay and lesbian newspaper in NSW (and Australia), with a circulation of 31,000 and readership of 80,000 per week. Around 25% of the readership are lesbian, and the remainder gay men.	20 March, 1/6 page advert p12 27 March, 1/6 page advert p12	√ 13 March 2003 √ 15 May 2003
<i>Lesbians on the Loose Magazine</i>	LOTL targets lesbians and has a circulation of around 20,000 per month.	March 2003, 1/8 page advert p17, p18, p39 April 2003, 1/8 page advert p15	√ March 2003 edition √ June 2003 edition
<i>SX Magazine</i>	SX targets the younger gay and lesbian 'clubbing' scene of 18-30 year-olds. Around 10% of the readership are lesbian and the remainder gay men.	13 March, 1/4 page advert p8 20 March, 1/4 page advert 6	

CPD's Policy Officer (Gay and Lesbian Liaison) was interviewed on *Lesbians On Air* 89.3FM on 25 March 2003 and on *Gaywaves* 2SER on 31 July 2003. (*Lesbians On Air* broadcasts in Sydney's western suburbs - from Fairfield to the base of the Blue Mountains).

The media release and other project information was also provided to *Bent* magazine and *Gaywaves* on 2SER.

#### Mainstream media outlets

Two regional mainstream newspapers were used to advertise the survey in the Illawarra/Wollongong region and in the Dubbo/western NSW region, to cater for population groups that might not be reached by the Sydney-based gay and lesbian press. Table A2 summarises this advertising.

**Table A2: Media Advertising in the Mainstream Media**

Press	Circulation	Advert dates & Size
<i>The Daily Liberal</i> newspaper - Wednesday	This paper is circulated to 10,500 people in Dubbo, Narromine, Trangie, Wongabbon, Guerie, Yeoval, Wellington, Peak Hill, Cumnock, Mendooran, Gilgandra, Gulargambone, Coonamble, Walgett, Lightning Ridge, Warren, Nyngan, Cobar, Carinda, Brewarrina, Brockelhurst, Byrock and Bourke	12 March, 1/8 page advert p.3
<i>The Mailbox Shopper</i> - free press	This free advertising paper is circulated to 17,500 people in Dubbo, Peak Hill, Yeoval, Tomingley, Wongarbon, Mendooran, Coolah, Gilgandra, Gulargambone, Coonamble, Baradine, Walgett, Brewarrina, and Bourke	12 March, 1/8 page advert p.5
<i>Illawarra Mercury</i> newspaper	This paper reaches 101,000 people and circulates state-wide, particularly in the Wollongong, Shellharbour, Kiama area as well as Southern Highlands and South Coast (cost \$1).	15 March
<i>The Advertiser</i> - free press	This free advertising paper is circulated to 147,000 adults plus a large percentage of under 18s throughout the South Coast region from Helensburgh to Gerroa	12 March

The project was also announced on 2BL (ABC radio) Breakfast News (5.30am, 6.30am, 7.45am) on 4 April 2003, with the Acting Director of the CPD being interviewed. This program is broadcast across NSW.

## Enlisting the assistance of government and community-based organisations

The study team and the Steering Committee provided information about the project to a wide range of community-based and government organisations which provide services to the gay and lesbian community (or particular sub-groups of the gay and lesbian community), by phone or email. These organisations were asked to assist with distribution in various ways (acting as a collection point, circulating information/copies of the questionnaire to members by newsletter/email/event, having a web link to the survey from their website etc). This included, among other strategies, a study team member with extensive experience working with gay and lesbian internet sites contacting a large number of gay and lesbian organisations via email. The Gay and Lesbian Anti Violence Project and members of the study team and Steering Committee also distributed copies through their networks.

Assistance was also sought from a range of mainstream organisations and services. This was regarded as particularly important since it was hoped to contact gay men and lesbians who were actively involved in gay and lesbian community life, as well as those who were not.

A list of organisations which were asked to assist and the methods of distribution used is set out in Appendix D. The list, however, only accounts for distribution by organisations that notified Urbis Keys Young of their actions. It can be safely assumed that other forms of distribution also occurred.

The types of organisations whose assistance was sought included:

- *The Attorney General's Department and Affiliated Agencies*, including organisations represented on the Steering Committee and NOGA, the Department's Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Community Advisory Committee, and the NSW Anti-Discrimination Board.
- *Anti-Discrimination Groups*, such as the EEO Forum and the Anti-Homophobia and Access Alliance.
- *Mainstream Community Services*, for instance the Local Community Services Association, Community Legal Centres, Local Councils, Police Gay and Lesbian Liaison Officers.
- *Health Services*, including Community Health Centres, Women's Health Centres, Sexual Health Centres and FPA (Family Planning Association) Health.
- *ACON & Affiliated Organisations*. All ACON branches across NSW assisted with survey distribution and many ACON specific projects contributed eg the Lesbian and Gay Anti-Violence Project and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Project.
- *Mainstream and Gay & Lesbian Youth Organisations*, including Youth Community Health Centres, NAAH, FPA Health, the Anti-Homophobia in Schools Interagency Working Group, organisations for university students, the Queer Facilitators Interagency (for individuals/agencies running social or support groups for gay and lesbian young people) and Twenty10 (lesbian and gay youth support service).
- *Gay-Friendly Businesses*, such as Ginardi Hair and the BumpHer bar.



- *A wide variety of Gay and Lesbian groups, including:*
  - community organisations (PLWHA, PRIDE, Gay and Lesbian Counselling Service)
  - legal/political/activist organisations (Gay and Lesbian Rights Lobby)
  - locality-based social organisations (Tamworth T Bags, Wagga Wagga Women's Group)
  - other social organisations (Leather Pride, Older Dykes, Butch and Femme)
  - business/professional organisations (LAWLES, Pink Directory)
  - sport and recreational organisations (Soccer Flying Bats, Sydney Spokes Cycling)
- *Organisations for Specific Ethnic, Cultural or Religious Sub-groups* of the gay and lesbian population, such as Dayenu (for Jewish gay men and lesbians), Sydney Asian Lesbians.
- *Indigenous Organisations*, including the NSW Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Sexual Health Workers network, Indigenous Workers of Australian Federation of AIDS Organisations, Wirringa Baiya Aboriginal Women's Legal Centre.

Initially such organisations were telephoned or emailed with information about the study and requested to assist in distribution. Most were very helpful in ensuring the survey was widely distributed. Over 4,000 paper copies were distributed to such organisations or interested individuals. Services which were provided with paper copies were also given reply-paid envelopes for return of completed responses. This ensured that the study required no financial expenditure by assisting organisations.

In the week prior to the official closing date of the survey (12 May), all agencies which were collection points for hard-copy questionnaires were reminded by fax/email to return completed questionnaires and to remind any clients to finalise their responses. A number of organisations also notified us of their efforts to distribute the survey (these are detailed in Appendix D).

As well as picking up and returning a paper copy of the survey to one of the various agencies acting as collection points, gay men and lesbians who heard about the survey through the various organisations contacted or via the media advertising also had the option of telephoning Urbis Keys Young to ask that a copy of the survey be posted to them. A free post box address was provided to return the completed surveys to.

### Establishment of a web-site

Previous research suggests that a high proportion of gay men and lesbians in NSW have access to, and use, the internet. For instance, a readership survey by the *Sydney Star Observer* in 2000 found that: 58% of respondents owned a computer and a further 26% intended to buy one in the next year; 57% already used the internet and 15% planned to get an Internet connection; and 35% had accessed *ssonet*, the *Sydney Star Observer's* web-site. The internet was therefore regarded as an effective way to reach a large number of gay and lesbian people in NSW for this project.

The website was operational from March 13 2003. It included an index page with general information on the study, an online completion form and pages with details of where to collect paper copies and where to go for further assistance.

The online form enabled respondents to access and complete the survey quickly, and used a submission process that forwarded completed responses via email. This removed an element of privacy from the completion of the online survey (since respondents had to submit the survey from an email address). The website therefore included a confidentiality statement and disclaimer, as below:

*On completion of this online survey it will be sent to Urbis Keys Young using the default email address of the computer you are using. Urbis Keys Young will treat this address as confidential, however if you would prefer to do otherwise please return to the previous page and make use of one of the other ways to access the survey.*

The website address was included in all the advertising and in any correspondence relating to survey distribution. All the organisations which were approached for assistance in circulating the survey questionnaire were informed about the website and were asked to place ads and/or links to the survey on their websites (if appropriate). A number of organisations assisted in this way (these organisations are covered in the list in Appendix D).

While a large number of responses were submitted through online completion, a small number of *blank* emails were also received. It appeared that some responses were lost in the process of submitting completed forms. Technical staff explored the situation (after the first week of online completion), and several possible causes were identified, including:

- a separation in email and internet programs
- use of a company or office-wide networked email program
- problems with older browsers.

After discussion with AGD and consultation with Steering Committee members, it was decided that relevant respondents would not be re-contacted as this would breach confidentiality provisions. The following notice was added to the introduction of the online form:

*Networked email programs and older browsers may have trouble submitting responses. Please make use of another means of completing the questionnaire. If your response will not send (giving you an error message), please copy and email your response OR print out your answers and post free to Jessica Smith, Urbis Keys Young, Reply Paid 1013, PO Box 252, Milsons Point NSW 1565.*

In total, 48 responses were lost due to this problem. Nonetheless, some respondents could have realised this as they submitted their surveys, and posted printed copies of the on-line surveys back as suggested. Several responses were received at Urbis Keys Young in this format.

### **Receipt of completed questionnaires**

Of the total 600 eligible responses, virtually even numbers arrived as online responses and as hard copies (303 and 297 respectively).

Survey responses were received from the opening date of March 12 through to June 9. While the flow of completed responses remained fairly steady (both online and paper completion), there were two peak times in which questionnaires were returned to Urbis Keys Young:

- the initial two weeks (during which a total of 216 responses were received); this coincided with the main thrust of advertising and emailing.
- the two weeks either side of the notified closure date (during which 184 responses were received).

Information was collected on the method by which people completed the survey (whether using the online form or a paper copy). Of the 297 paper questionnaires received, 49 came through mainstream organisations, 141 through gay and lesbian organisations, and 107 from individuals who had either requested the survey by contacting Urbis Keys Young or had downloaded and printed the questionnaire.

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### Stage 3: Conduct of focus groups

After completion of the survey and analysis of the survey results, the study team conducted eight focus groups in August 2003 which were designed to shed further light on a number of issues, and to obtain more detailed information from some groups which were not represented in large numbers in the survey. These eight groups were as follows:

1. Indigenous gay men
2. Indigenous lesbians
3. lesbian and gay parents
4. young gay men and lesbians
5. mature age gay men and lesbians (aged over 50)
6. gay men and lesbians of Middle-Eastern background
7. gay men of Asian background
8. gay men in western Sydney (not university-educated, not working in professional or managerial etc positions).

Participants in these various groups were recruited through a variety of contacts, but mostly through relevant community organisations or social support groups – for example, Asian and Indigenous project officers at ACON.

In consultation with AGD, Urbis Keys Young developed a semi-structured topic outline (see Appendix C) to provide a framework for discussion in the groups.

Each group meeting lasted between 90 minutes and two hours.



# Appendix B

## Survey Questionnaire



## Survey on Personal Safety for Lesbians and Gay Men in NSW

This survey is being carried out on behalf of the NSW Attorney General's Department (Crime Prevention Division) in partnership with other NSW Government agencies and community organisations such as the Gay and Lesbian Rights Lobby and the Lesbian and Gay Anti-Violence Project. The survey is being conducted by social researchers Urbis Keys Young.

If you need ADDITIONAL COPIES of the questionnaire for colleagues or friends, you can ring Jessica at Urbis Keys Young (02 9956 7515), or obtain a copy on-line at <http://www.urbis.com.au/clients.htm>. The survey can also be completed on-line.

### WHO IS THIS SURVEY FOR?

The survey is about personal safety and 'homophobic' violence or abuse – that is, abuse or violence which is anti-gay or anti-lesbian in nature.

- We ask *all gay men and lesbians* in NSW to complete the questionnaire, whether or not you personally have experienced violence or abuse that relates to your sexuality.
- *Bisexual people* and *transgender people* are also invited to complete the questionnaire, in relation to any experience or opinions about violence/abuse that is homophobic/anti-gay/anti-lesbian in nature.
- *Heterosexual people* may wish to complete the questionnaire if they have experience or concerns about violence/abuse that relates to other people perceiving them as lesbian or gay.

To fill out the questionnaire, mostly you just need to circle the number (or numbers) corresponding to your answer - eg ③

- 1.** Are you -
- Male ..... 1
- Female ..... 2
- Transgender ..... 3
- 2.** Which of these age groups are you in?
- 15 or under ..... 1
- 16 - 19 ..... 2
- 20 - 24 ..... 3
- 25 - 29 ..... 4
- 30 - 34 ..... 5
- 35 - 39 ..... 6
- 40 - 49 ..... 7
- 50 or over ..... 8
- 3.** Postcode of the suburb or town where you live? \_\_\_\_\_
- 4.** Which one of these best describes your sexuality?
- Lesbian / gay woman ..... 1
- Gay/homosexual man ..... 2 (Go to Q6)
- Bisexual ..... 3 (Go to Q7)
- Heterosexual ..... 4 (Go to Q8)
- Other (please specify \_\_\_\_\_) ..... 5

**Lesbians** please answer Q5; **Gay men** please go to Q6.

- 5.** As a lesbian, do you generally feel that you are -
- Safer from violence than most other women ..... 1 (Go to Q7)
- About as safe as most other women ..... 2 (Go to Q7)
- Less safe than most other women ..... 3 (Go to Q7)
- Not sure ..... 4 (Go to Q7)

- 6.** As a gay man, do you generally feel that you are -
- Safer from violence than most other men ..... 1
- About as safe as most other men ..... 2
- Less safe than most other men ..... 3
- Not sure ..... 4

- 7.** How strongly do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements? (Circle **one** number on **each line**, from 1 (*Strongly Disagree*) through to 5 (*Strongly Agree*.)

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
(i) As a lesbian/gay man/bisexual person I feel vulnerable to violence or harassment from people I know	1	2	3	4	5
(ii) I am generally pretty open about my sexuality	1	2	3	4	5
(iii) There are some things that I do, or avoid doing, because of possible violence or harassment against lesbians/gay men/bisexuals	1	2	3	4	5
(iv) Lesbians/gay men/bisexuals are generally safer if they hide their sexual preference	1	2	3	4	5
(v) As a lesbian/gay man/bisexual I feel vulnerable to violence or harassment from strangers	1	2	3	4	5
(vi) I would be confident about reporting violence or harassment to the Police if I thought it was serious enough	1	2	3	4	5
(vii) Possible anti-gay/anti-lesbian harassment or violence is not much of a worry for me personally	1	2	3	4	5
(viii) I feel pretty safe in the area where I live	1	2	3	4	5



**8** This question is **ONLY** about abuse, harassment or violence that is anti-lesbian/anti-gay/homophobic.  
PLEASE COMPLETE **BOTH** COLUMN (a) **AND** COLUMN (b) in the table below:

	(a)	(b)
	Have you experienced any of the following IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS because you are gay or lesbian, or because others think you may be gay or lesbian?	Have you <b>EVER</b> experienced any of the following because you are gay or lesbian, or because others think you may be gay or lesbian?
	[Circle each number that applies]	
(i) Written threats or abuse / hate mail	1	1
(ii) Verbal abuse	2	2
(iii) Harassment such as spitting, offensive gestures, being followed etc	3	3
(iv) Threatened/attempted physical attack or assault	4	4
(v) Physical assault or attack without a weapon	5	5
(vi) Physical assault or attack <i>with</i> a weapon (eg bottle, stones, knife)	6	6
(vii) Sexual assault	7	7
(viii) Property damage/vandalism/theft	8	8
(ix) None of the above	9	9

If you have NOT experienced any of these things in the **past 12 months** (Column a), please GO TO Q11, page 5.

**8(c)** In total, how many separate incidents of anti-gay/anti-lesbian abuse or violence have you experienced in the PAST 12 MONTHS?

\_\_\_\_\_

**9** The following questions are about the MOST RECENT incident that you experienced in the past 12 months – as indicated in COLUMN (a) in Q8. (If nothing in Column (a), please go to Q11.)

Now thinking of that most recent incident:

**(a)** Which one of the following best describes that incident? .....  
(Circle one number only)

- Written threats or abuse / hate mail.....1
- Verbal abuse.....2
- Harassment (such as spitting, offensive gestures, being followed, etc) .....3
- Threatened/attempted physical attack or assault.....4
- Physical assault or attack without a weapon.....5
- Physical assault or attack with a weapon (eg bottle, stones, knife).....6
- Sexual assault .....7
- Property damage/vandalism/theft .....8
- Other (please specify \_\_\_\_\_) .....9

**(b)** Was that a single incident or something that was repeated/ongoing?

- Single incident..... 1
- Repeated/ongoing ..... 2

**(c)** Where did that (mostly) take place? (Please circle one number only)

- At your home or nearby – eg in the street outside ..... 1
- Attacker's/perpetrator's home or nearby.....2
- At or near your place or work or study.....3
- At or near a lesbian or gay venue .....4
- In the street (but not any of the above).....5
- Other pub/club (not lesbian/gay venue) .....6
- Bus stop/railway station/on public transport.....7
- Beat/cruising place .....8
- Car park.....9
- Shops/shopping centre .....10
- Park .....11
- Other open space eg beach, the bush .....12
- Other (please specify \_\_\_\_\_) .....13

**(d)** In what town/suburb was that? (Add postcode if you know it)

\_\_\_\_\_

**(e)** Please briefly describe what happened:

.....  
 .....  
 .....



- (f)** How many attackers/perpetrators were there?
- One ..... 1  
 Two or three ..... 2  
 Four or more ..... 3  
 Not sure ..... 4
- (g)** The gender of the attacker(s) or perpetrator(s) was:
- Male only ..... 1  
 Female only ..... 2  
 Both male and female ..... 3  
 Not sure ..... 4
- (h)** Which one of the following best describes the age group of the attacker(s) or perpetrator(s)?
- 15 or under ..... 1  
 16 - 19 ..... 2  
 20 - 29 ..... 3  
 30 - 39 ..... 4  
 40 or over ..... 5  
 Not sure ..... 6
- (i)** Did you know any of the attacker(s)/perpetrator(s)?
- Yes, knew them (or one or some of them) personally - eg knew them by name ..... 1  
 Just knew them by sight/knew where they came from etc ..... 2  
 No - stranger(s) ..... 3
- (j)** Which one of these best describes the attacker's/perpetrator's relationship to you?
- Stranger/no relationship ..... 1  
 Casual acquaintance ..... 2  
 Partner/spouse ..... 3  
 Parent(s) ..... 4  
 Brother or sister ..... 5  
 Other relative ..... 6  
 Co-worker, work colleague ..... 7  
 Neighbour ..... 8  
 Student - own school or other school ..... 9  
 Client (of a sex worker) ..... 10  
 Other client/customer/patient etc ..... 11  
 Other (please specify: \_\_\_\_\_) ..... 12
- (k)** Were you alone at the time of the incident?
- Yes, alone ..... 1  
 No - was with one other person ..... 2  
 No - was in a group (two or more other people) ..... 3
- (l)** Did you suffer any physical injury as the result of this incident?
- Yes - serious physical injury ..... 1  
 Yes - minor physical injury ..... 2  
 No physical injury ..... 3

- (m)** In addition to your sexuality (eg being seen as gay or lesbian), do you believe that any of the following things were contributing factors to this incident? (Circle any numbers that apply)

- Yes - gender ..... 1  
 Yes - race/ethnicity ..... 2  
 Yes - clothing or personal appearance/presentation ..... 3  
 Yes - HIV/AIDS (actual or perceived) ..... 4  
 Yes - religion ..... 5  
 Yes - disability ..... 6  
 Yes - something else (specify: \_\_\_\_\_) ..... 7

Any further comments ?

.....

.....

- (n)** Do you think the attacker(s) or perpetrator(s) was/were affected by alcohol or other drugs at the time?

- Yes ..... 1  
 No ..... 2  
 Not sure ..... 3

- 10(a)** Still thinking of that most recent incident - did you seek help from any of the following? (Circle all that apply)

- Partner ..... 1  
 Friend ..... 2  
 Family, relatives ..... 3  
 Neighbours ..... 4  
 Passer-by ..... 5

- (b)** Did you report that matter to, or seek assistance or advice from, any of the following? (Circle all that apply)

- The Police ..... 1  
 Police Gay and Lesbian Liaison Officers (GLLOs) ..... 2  
 A *work*-related support service (eg complaints officer at work, Human Resources, etc) ..... 3  
 Lawyer/Community Legal Service ..... 4  
 Victims of Crime Bureau ..... 5  
 Victims Compensation Tribunal ..... 6  
 Victims Support Line ..... 7  
 WorkCover ..... 8  
 Hospital, clinic or Community Health Centre ..... 9  
 Counsellor/psychologist/social worker ..... 10  
 Anti-Discrimination Board ..... 11  
 The Lesbian and Gay Anti-Violence Project (Sydney) ..... 12  
 ACON - city or regional branches ..... 13  
 Gay and Lesbian Counselling Service ..... 14  
 Other gay or lesbian organisation, support group, help line etc ..... 15  
 Mainstream support group, help line etc (not specifically gay/lesbian) ..... 16  
 Other organisation, service or institution (Specify \_\_\_\_\_) ..... 17





**10(c)** For each one of the services that you have reported using (Q 10(b) on previous page), please complete COLUMN **(a)** to show how supportive and co-operative you found them in this case; then complete COLUMN **(b)** to show how valuable the advice or service given was to you in this case.

	<b>(a)</b>			<b>(b)</b>		
	How <b>supportive and co-operative</b> was this service?			How <b>valuable</b> to you was the advice or service given?		
	Very supportive	Reasonably supportive	Not supportive	Very valuable	Reasonably valuable	Not valuable
1. The Police	1	2	3	1	2	3
2. Police Gay and Lesbian Liaison Officers (GLLOs)	1	2	3	1	2	3
3. Work-related support service	1	2	3	1	2	3
4. Lawyer/ Community Legal Service	1	2	3	1	2	3
5. Victims of Crime Bureau	1	2	3	1	2	3
6. Victims Compensation Board	1	2	3	1	2	3
7. Victims Support Line	1	2	3	1	2	3
8. WorkCover	1	2	3	1	2	3
9. Hospital, clinic or Community Health Centre	1	2	3	1	2	3
10. Counsellor/ psychologist/ social worker	1	2	3	1	2	3
11. Anti – Discrimination Board	1	2	3	1	2	3
12. The Lesbian and Gay Anti-Violence Project (Sydney)	1	2	3	1	2	3
13. ACON – city or regional branches	1	2	3	1	2	3
14. Gay and Lesbian Counselling Service	1	2	3	1	2	3
15. Other gay or lesbian organisation, support group, help line etc	1	2	3	1	2	3
16. Mainstream support group, help line etc	1	2	3	1	2	3
17. Other organisation, service or institution	1	2	3	1	2	3

**(d)** Do you have any other comments about particular services that you used in connection with this incident?

Name or type of service: .....

Comments: .....

.....

.....

.....

Name or type of service: .....

Comments: .....

.....

.....

.....

**(e)** Do you have any comments about particular services that you decided **not** to use in connection with this incident?

Name or type of service: .....

Comments: .....

.....

.....

.....

Name or type of service: .....

Comments: .....

.....

.....

.....



**EVERYBODY PLEASE ANSWER:**

**11(a)** Thinking specifically about **anti-gay/anti-lesbian abuse or violence** – have experiences or concerns about that sort of abuse or violence ever had any of the following effects for you? (Circle all that apply)

- Made you less likely to go to places used by lesbians and gay men.....1
- Made you generally less likely to go out / go to public places / socialise..... 2
- Made you decide to hide / keep hiding your sexuality .....3
- Made you feel bad or sad about your sexuality..... 4
- Made you modify your behaviour (eg dress differently, avoid showing affection for a partner in public) .....5
- Made you depressed .....6
- Made you feel worried, stressed or anxious .....7
- Led to problems sleeping or getting to sleep .....8
- Led to use or increased use of prescription drugs .....9
- Led to increased alcohol or drug consumption.....10
- Led you to seek counselling .....11
- Led you to take time off work .....12
- Had a negative effect on your friendships/relationships .....13

**(b)** Do concerns about your safety as a lesbian or gay man have any other effects on your behaviour or activities? IF YES, please summarise below:

.....

.....

.....

.....

Finally, a few more questions about you:

**12(a)** Which one of these **best** describes your occupation?

- Paid work/self-employed ..... 1
- Unemployed, looking for work.....2 Go to Q13
- Student .....3 Go to Q13
- Pensioner/sickness benefits etc .....4 Go to Q13
- Home duties .....5 Go to Q13
- Retired .....6 Go to Q13
- Other (specify \_\_\_\_\_).....7 Go to Q13

**(b) IF** in paid work or self-employed – which one of the following **best** describes your current occupation?

- Manual work/blue collar..... 1
- Skilled trade .....2
- Customer service/sales/clerical.....3
- Professional/managerial .....4
- Other (specify \_\_\_\_\_).....5

**13.** Which one of these **best** describes your race or ethnicity?

- Caucasian/Anglo/European ..... 1
- Aboriginal .....2
- Torres Strait Islander .....3
- Pacific/South Sea Islander.....4
- Asian .....5
- Middle Eastern .....6
- African.....7
- Other (specify \_\_\_\_\_) .....8

**14.** Your highest level of education?

- Primary school ..... 1
- Part secondary school .....2
- Completed secondary school.....3
- TAFE/trade/technical qualification .....4
- University.....5

**15.** Is there anything else about anti-gay or anti-lesbian violence or abuse that you would like to comment on?

.....

.....

.....

.....

Many thanks for your time and your co-operation

PLEASE RETURN this questionnaire by placing it in an envelope (no stamp required) and addressing it to:

Jessica Smith  
Urbis Keys Young  
Reply Paid 1013  
PO Box 252  
Milsons Point NSW 1565

Alternatively, you can return the completed questionnaire to one of the following places:

- ACON city office and regional branches
- Ginardi Hair Darlinghurst
- Sydney Pride Centre
- Dendy Newtown
- Twenty 10 gay + lesbian youth support
- Gay and Lesbian Rights Lobby
- Women's Health Services (Albury-Wodonga, Bankstown, Bathurst, Blue Mountains, Campsie, Illawarra, Leichhardt, Lismore, Liverpool, Wagga Wagga)
- Gay and Lesbian Counselling Service
- People Living with HIV/AIDS



If you would like to talk to a counsellor about experiences or concerns relating to violence or abuse, organisations you could contact include the following:

### For young people:

#### Kids Help Line

24 hour phone line for young people  
 Free call: 1800 55 1800  
[www.kidshelp.com.au](http://www.kidshelp.com.au)

#### Twenty10 gay + lesbian youth support

To speak with a youth worker  
 Call: (02) 8585 6300  
 Regional NSW call: 1800 65 2010

### Other Services:

#### Lesbian and Gay Anti-Violence Project

AVP Report line: (02) 9206 2116  
 Free Call: 1800 063 060  
 General Enquires: (02) 9206 2066  
 Email: [avpl@acon.org.au](mailto:avpl@acon.org.au)

#### NSW Police Force – Gay and Lesbian Liaison Officers (GLLO)

Emergencies: 000  
 Ask the switchboard: (02) 9281 0000 for the nearest GLLO

#### Victims Support Line

24 hour support line run by the Victims of Crime Bureau and Mission Australia  
 Call: (02) 9374 3000  
 Freecall: 1800 633 063

If you or someone you care about have been a victim of crime you can call the Victims Support Line to talk about your experience and get information, support and referral to a range of services that can assist.  
[www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/voc](http://www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/voc)

#### Gay and Lesbian Counselling Service

A nightly counselling and referral service from 4pm to midnight  
 Call: (02) 9207 2800 or freecall 1800 805 379  
[www.glcsnsw.org.au](http://www.glcsnsw.org.au)

#### ACON (AIDs Council of NSW)

Call 1800 063 060 or (02) 9206 2000  
 ACON Sydney, 9 Commonwealth St Surry Hills 2010  
 With regional offices:

- Western Sydney: (02) 9204 2400
- Hunter: (02) 4927 6808
- Illawarra: (02) 4226 1163
- Northern Rivers: (02) 6622 1555
- Mid-North Coast: (02) 6584 0943

Central email: [acon@acon.org.au](mailto:acon@acon.org.au)



# Appendix C

## Focus Group Discussion Outline

## ***Homophobic Violence - Focus Group Outline***

**Introduction:** Nature and purpose of the discussion – part of a larger NSW research project commissioned by Attorney General’s Department. We are going to be discussing personal safety for lesbians and gay men, and issues relating to homophobic abuse, harassment or violence. Naturally people in the group may have different opinions or experience - we are keen that everybody should have their say.

The meeting is likely to last about an hour and a half. We will treat the discussion as confidential, and we ask everybody in the group to respect other people’s privacy.

Check if it is OK to tape the discussion.

- 1(a) First a very broad question - as a lesbian, do you generally feel that you are about as safe from abuse or violence as most other women – or less safe, or more safe?

Why do you say that?

**OR**

- (b) As a gay man, do you generally feel that you are about as safe from abuse or violence as most other men – or less so, or more so?

Why do you say that?

- (c) What about any bisexual people in the group?

2. (*Ask participants to complete Agree/Disagree form, then invite discussion.*) Do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements? *Why* is that?

(a) As a lesbian/gay man/bisexual I feel vulnerable to violence or harassment from *people I know*.

(b) As a lesbian/gay man/bisexual I feel vulnerable to violence or harassment from *strangers*.

(c) Lesbians/gay men/bisexuals are generally safer if they hide their sexual preference.

(d) I feel pretty safe in the area where I live.

(e) Possible anti-gay/anti-lesbian harassment or violence is not much of an issue for me personally.

- 3(a) Do you think there are *particular situations/locations* in which lesbians/ gay men are more likely to be abused or attacked? What situations/locations? *Why* are they more risky? What issues or situations are of most concern to you personally?

- (b) Just checking again on *location* or *where people live* – do you feel that there is more risk of abuse or violence in some areas than others? Which areas are most dangerous, and why?
- 4(a) Do you think there are *particular types of people* who are more likely than others to be the subject of homophobic abuse or attack – for example in terms of age, gender, race, appearance, etc? Why do you say that?
- (b) [For Indigenous, Asian and Middle Eastern groups] What comments do you have about any homophobic abuse from within *your own race or ethnic group*, compared with racist or homophobic abuse from other people outside that group?
- 5(a) Are different types of people likely to experience different *types* of homophobic abuse, harassment or violence? In what ways?
- (b) Are some people at risk of abuse, harassment etc because of their relationship with a lesbian or gay person – eg a child, other relative, a friend, etc? What is your experience in this regard?
6. Have you experienced any sort of homophobic abuse, harassment or violence in the past year? If **YES**:
- (a) What sort of abuse was involved? What happened? (*Ask group*;) Have other people had a comparable experience, either in the past year, or at some earlier time?
- (b) What sort of person/people were responsible for that abuse (eg gender, age, numbers)? (*Ask group*;) What has the experience of other people been?
- (c) Did you *know* the perpetrator(s), or know who they were or where they were from? (*Ask group*;) What about other people's experience in that regard? If you did know the perpetrator(s), what was their relationship to you?

7. What have been the effects for you personally – if any – of experience or concerns relating to anti-gay/anti-lesbian abuse or violence? Have those been shorter-term (how long?) or longer-term effects? What would you say has been the most important or serious effect for you?
8. Are there some things that you do, or avoid doing, because of concerns about anti-gay/anti-lesbian abuse or violence? What sorts of things?
9. And thinking about gay men and lesbians generally – what effects do you think anti-gay/anti-lesbian abuse or violence has on them? What would you say are the most serious or important effects? Are different sorts of people likely to be affected in different ways and, if so, how?
10. When you did/if you did experience an anti-gay/anti-lesbian attack or abuse, whom did you/would you be most likely to go to for help or support? Would it depend on the nature or results of the abuse? In what way?
- 11(a) How confident would you feel about reporting homophobic abuse or violence to the Police if you felt the matter was serious enough?
- (b) Have you ever reported an incident of anti-gay/anti-lesbian abuse, harassment or violence to the Police or a Gay and Lesbian Liaison Officer?
- (c) If yes, what were the circumstances? What happened? Were any *charges laid* relating to the matter(s)?
- (d) How supportive/co-operative did you find the Police/GLLOs supportive and cooperative?
- (e) How useful do you feel it was to report the incident in this way?
- (f) Would you recommend that other people go to the Police/GLLOs in a similar situation? Why is that?

12(a) In relation to anti-gay/anti-lesbian abuse or attack, have you ever sought help from other professional people, organisations etc – eg a doctor or hospital, counsellor, Lesbian and Gay Anti-Violence Project, a support service at work or at school? In each case:

(b) What were the circumstances? What happened?

(c) How supportive cooperative did you find that service/group?

(d) How *useful* was it to report the incident or seek help in that way?

(e) Would you recommend that other people in a similar situation go to that same sort of person/organisation? Why/Why not?

13. If you suffered serious or significant abuse as a lesbian/gay man, are there particular services that you yourself would be -

(a) likely to use? or

(b) likely to avoid?

Why is that?

14. Is there anything else you would like to say about anti-gay/anti-lesbian abuse or violence?

**Thanks. Distribute contact/referral list.**





## Appendix D

### Organisations which provided assistance with survey distribution

<i>Name of Organisation</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Organisation notified by e-mail, phone or personal announcement / visit</i>	<i>Organisation distributed paper copies</i>	<i>Organisation provided other means of assistance</i>
<b>THE ATTORNEY GENERAL'S DEPARTMENT AND AFFILIATED AGENCIES</b>				
NSW AGD's CPD	Sydney City	√	√	√ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• web link on CPD Site</li> <li>• circulated at meetings, presentations, lectures, organisation visits</li> <li>• distributed fliers</li> <li>• promoted in newsletters: Partners in Crime, Infolink intranet site for AG's</li> <li>• e-mailed over 200 contacts</li> </ul>
NSW AGD Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender (GLBT) Community Advisory Committee	NSW	√	√	√ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• e-mailed contacts</li> </ul>
NSW AGD's NOGA, including the NOGA Research Steering Committee <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Ombudsman's Office</li> <li>– Police (including Gay and Lesbian Liaison Officers – GLLOs)</li> <li>– Department of Community Services</li> <li>– Department of Juvenile Justice</li> <li>– Department for Women</li> <li>– Health (including Victims of Crime Contact Officers, Area Health Officers and Gay and Lesbian e-list)</li> <li>– Commission for Children and Young People</li> <li>– Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care</li> <li>– Premier's Department</li> <li>– The Cabinet Office</li> <li>– Department of Local Government</li> </ul>				√ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• e-mailed contacts</li> <li>• web links</li> <li>• distributed fliers</li> <li>• promoted fliers and surveys in newsletters and on websites</li> </ul>

<i>Name of Organisation</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Organisation notified by e-mail, phone or personal announcement / visit</i>	<i>Organisation distributed paper copies</i>	<i>Organisation provided other means of assistance</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Department of Education and Training, TAFE</li> <li>- South Sydney City Council</li> <li>- City of Sydney Council</li> <li>- Department of Aboriginal Affairs</li> <li>- Legal Aid NSW</li> <li>- NSW Anti-Discrimination Board (including Lesbian and Gay Consultation)</li> </ul>	- -	- -	- -	- -
NSW AGD HAD (Homosexual Advance Defence) Monitoring Committee	NSW	√	√	√ • e-mailed contacts
Victims Services	Sydney City	√	√	
<b>ANTI-DISCRIMINATION GROUPS</b>				
Anti-discrimination Advocacy Project	Sydney City	√	√	
Anti-Homophobia in Schools Interagency	NSW	√	√	√ • e-mailed contacts
Victims Services	Sydney City	√	√	
EEO Forum - NSW Public Sector EEO Co-ordinators E-list	NSW	√		√ • distributed to co-ordinators
The Gender Centre Inc	Petersham	√		√ • advertised on web site
Anti Homophobia and Access Alliance	NSW	√		

<i>Name of Organisation</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Organisation notified by e-mail, phone or personal announcement / visit</i>	<i>Organisation distributed paper copies</i>	<i>Organisation provided other means of assistance</i>
<b>COMMUNITY SERVICES</b>				
Local Community Services Association (LCSA)	NSW	√		√ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• distributed in e-newsletter to the 200 NSW Neighbourhood and Community Centres</li> </ul>
Community Builders e-mail list	NSW	√		√ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• distributed in e-newsletter</li> </ul>
Western Sydney Sole Women's Accommodation Services	Doonside	√	√	
Womens Legal Resource Centre	Sydney	√		
National Association of Community Legal Centres	NSW	√		
Shopfront Youth Legal Centre	Darlinghurst	√		
Inner City Legal Centre	Sydney City			
Liverpool Women's Resource Centre	Liverpool	√		
<b>LOCAL COUNCILS</b>				
Canterbury City Council	Canterbury	√	√	
Fairfield City Council	Fairfield	√	√	
Mid-North Coast Council for Social and Regional Development	Hastings	√	√	
Hastings Council	Hastings	√	√	√ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• e-mailed contacts, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Port Macquarie Adult Education</li> <li>– Port Meals on Wheels</li> <li>– Population Health</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

<i>Name of Organisation</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Organisation notified by e-mail, phone or personal announcement / visit</i>	<i>Organisation distributed paper copies</i>	<i>Organisation provided other means of assistance</i>
<b>HEALTH SERVICES</b>				
NSW Community Health Centres	NSW	√		
Batemans Bay Community Health Centre	Batemans Bay	√	√	
South Eastern Sydney Area Health Service	South Eastern Sydney	√		√ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• e-mailed sexual health workers across Area Health Service</li> </ul>
Bankstown Health Service	South Western Sydney	√	√	√
College of Nursing Sydney	Camperdown	√		√ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• sent an e-bulletin to all students</li> </ul>
Liverpool Women's Health Centre	Liverpool	√	√	
Albury Wodonga Women's Centre	Albury Wodonga	√	√	√ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• sent info out in quarterly newsletter to 120 members and to local agencies</li> <li>• e-mailed 30 contacts</li> </ul>
Leichhardt Women's Community Health Centre	Leichhardt	√	√	
Blue Mountains. Women's Health Centre	Blue Mountains	√	√	√ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• web link</li> <li>• posted out survey to 75 lesbian clients</li> <li>• distributed at afternoon session organised with ACON</li> </ul>

<i>Name of Organisation</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Organisation notified by e-mail, phone or personal announcement / visit</i>	<i>Organisation distributed paper copies</i>	<i>Organisation provided other means of assistance</i>
Campsie Women's Centre	Campsie	√	√	
Dympna House Child Sexual Assault Counselling and Resource Centre	Haberfield	√	√	
Illawarra Women's Health Centre	Warilla	√	√	√ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>e-mailed contacts</li> </ul>
Bankstown Women's Health Centre	Bankstown	√	√	
Central West Women's Health Centre	Bathurst	√	√	
Lismore and district Women's Health Centre	Lismore	√	√	
Wagga Wagga Women's Health Centre	Wagga Wagga	√	√	√ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>notified 11 organisations as well as individuals, community members and social groups</li> </ul>
Illawarra Sexual Health Service	Warrawong	√	√	
Coffs Harbour Sexual Health Unit	Coffs Harbour South	√	√	√ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>distributed flyers and posters around hospital facilities</li> </ul>
Narooma Community Health and Sexual Health Centre	Narooma	√	√	√ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>distributed flyers &amp; information in newsletters</li> </ul>
Albury Community and Sexual Health Services	Albury	√	√	√
Queanbeyan Community Health Service	Queanbeyan	√	√	

<i>Name of Organisation</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Organisation notified by e-mail, phone or personal announcement / visit</i>	<i>Organisation distributed paper copies</i>	<i>Organisation provided other means of assistance</i>
Sexual Health Staff employed by the Southern Area Health Service	Eurobodalla Bega Valley, Cooma- Monaro, Young / Yass, Goulburn, Queanbeyan	√	√	
Tamworth Sexual Health Service, New England Area Health Service	Tamworth	√	√	√ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>e-mailed New England Health Service Providers</li> <li>distributed to G&amp;L contacts in the community</li> </ul>
Wagga Wagga Sexual Health Clinic	Sydney City	√	√	
Sydney Sexual Health Centre	Sydney City	√	√	
<b>YOUTH ORGANISATIONS</b>				
Twenty 10 gay and lesbian youth support	Glebe	√	√	√
- Queer Facilitators Interagency - Cellblock (Space, GenYouth) - Fun & Esteem, ACON - GALAH, GLAM North Sydney youth groups - ACON West - GLYSN, Sutherland youth group - 78ers - Westguys - The Warehouse, Penrith - WYLD, Lesbians in Blacktown	Sydney	√	√	
NSW Association for Adolescent Health (NAAH)	NSW	√		√ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>e-mailed contacts across NSW</li> </ul>
Community Health Centres – Youth Workers	NSW	√		
Hastings Youth Workers Network	Hastings	√		

<i>Name of Organisation</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Organisation notified by e-mail, phone or personal announcement / visit</i>	<i>Organisation distributed paper copies</i>	<i>Organisation provided other means of assistance</i>
Hastings Department of Education District Office	Hastings	√		
UNSW University Group Sexuality Officers	Sydney Eastern Suburbs	√		
UWS Queer Group	Sydney Western Suburbs	√		√ • distributed to students
University of Sydney Coming Out Group	Sydney Inner West Suburbs	√		
Macquarie University Queer Group	Macquarie	√		√ • distributed to students
OUTS Action Collective - UTS	Sydney Inner West Suburbs	√		
Same Difference Youth Panel Speakers, FPA Health	NSW	√		√ • distributed to e-mail list
Anti-homophobia teacher & youth worker training, FPA Health	Newcastle	√		
Youth.Comm - e-mailing list an initiative of the Commonwealth Government of Australia, Youth Bureau (Department of Family and Community Services)	NSW	√		√ • distributed to entire mailing list
YouthGAS – e-mailing list for networking and communication resource for and about young Australians	NSW	√		√ • distributed to entire mailing list



<i>Name of Organisation</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Organisation notified by e-mail, phone or personal announcement / visit</i>	<i>Organisation distributed paper copies</i>	<i>Organisation provided other means of assistance</i>
Youth Field Xpress – monthly e-mail newsletter sent out by the Australian Clearinghouse for Youth studies	NSW	√		√ • advertised in monthly e-newsletter on the 28th March 2003.
Mogenic – youth website	NSW	√		
<b>GAY-FRIENDLY BUSINESSES</b>				
Dendy Newtown	Newtown	√	√	
Ginardi Hair	Darlinghurst	√	√	
Hot to Foxtrot Dance Studio	Sydney	√		
Le Groove Dance Company	Sydney	√		
DinnerMates	Balmain	√		√ • e-mailed contacts
BumpHer Bar	Lesbian Venue - Darlinghurst	√		
Zeroup Childcare	Sydney	√		

<i>Name of Organisation</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Organisation notified by e-mail, phone or personal announcement / visit</i>	<i>Organisation distributed paper copies</i>	<i>Organisation provided other means of assistance</i>
<b>ACON &amp; AFFILIATED ORGANISATIONS</b>				
Lesbian and Gay Anti-Violence Project	ACON Sydney City	√	√	√ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• e-mailed contacts (over 200 groups and individuals)</li> <li>• distributed flyers and posters</li> <li>• advertised at fair Day 2003</li> <li>• advertise at Self-defence workshops</li> <li>• advertised in newsletter reaching 30,000</li> </ul>
ACON Sydney	Surry Hills	√	√	√ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• distributed through a wide range of programs, including:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– SWOP (Sex Workers' Outreach Project)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
ACON Hunter	Islington	√	√	√ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• advertised in newsletter</li> </ul>
ACON Illawarra	Wollongong	√	√	√
ACON Northern Rivers	Lismore	√	√	√
ACON Mid-North Coast	Port Macquarie	√	√	√
ACON Western Sydney	Westmead	√	√	√

<i>Name of Organisation</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Organisation notified by e-mail, phone or personal announcement / visit</i>	<i>Organisation distributed paper copies</i>	<i>Organisation provided other means of assistance</i>
<b>GAY AND LESBIAN ORGANISATIONS</b>				
<i>Community Organisations</i>				
PLWHA (NSW)	Sydney	√	√	
Sydney PRIDE Centre	Sydney	√	√	
Gay and Lesbian Counselling Service, NSW	Sydney	√	√	
Positive Support Network	Gosford	√	√	
PFLAG Western Sydney Inc, Western Sydney Gay & lesbian Parents,	Western Sydney	√		√ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• advertised in monthly newsletter</li> </ul>
AusQUEER e-mail list	NSW	√		
QUEERSyd e-mail list	NSW	√		
Gaywaves – 2ser	NSW	√		√
PINKSOFA	Sydney	√		√ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• web link from their site</li> </ul>
PINKBOARD	Sydney	√		
<b>LEGAL/POLITICAL/ACTIVIST ORGANISATIONS</b>				
Gay and Lesbian Rights Lobby	Sydney	√	√	√ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• advertised in newsletter</li> <li>• advertised at Fair Day stall</li> <li>• e-mailed contacts</li> <li>• web link from their site</li> </ul>
Australian Centre for Lesbian and Gay Research	NSW	√		
Coalition of Activist Lesbians, Illawarra	Illawarra	√	√	√ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• e-mailed contacts</li> <li>• distributed flyers and posters</li> </ul>

<i>Name of Organisation</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Organisation notified by e-mail, phone or personal announcement / visit</i>	<i>Organisation distributed paper copies</i>	<i>Organisation provided other means of assistance</i>
<b>LOCALITY-BASED SOCIAL ORGANISATIONS</b>				
Tamworth T Bags	Tamworth	√		
Hastings Gay, Lesbian, Bi and Transgender Working Group	Hastings	√		
Lesbians of Albury Wodonga	Albury Wodonga	√	√	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• e-mailed contacts PDF</li> <li>• distributed at social nights</li> </ul>
Canterbury/Bankstown Gay and Lesbian Social group	Canterbury / Bankstown	√		
AQuA – Armidale Queer Association	Armidale	√		
<b>ASSOCIATION</b>				
Central Coast Coastal Connections	Tuggerah	√		
Central Coast lesbian Support Group	Gosford	√		
Gosford Community Connections	Gosford	√		
Coastal LYNX – GLBT Social Group	Taree-Coffs Harbour	√		
Geelong Lesbian Group (GLG)	Geelong	√		
Go Camp Outback	Broken Hill	√	√	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• posted copies in mailout</li> </ul>
Illawarra Lesbian Health Project	Illawarra	√		
Lesbians in the Shoalhaven Area	Shoalhaven	√		
Rainbow Visions Hunter	Newcastle	√		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• web link on Newcastle based queer community organisation</li> </ul>
Tropical Fruits (Northern Rivers NSW)	Lismore	√		
Southern Beaches gay and lesbian group	Southern Beaches	√		

<i>Name of Organisation</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Organisation notified by e-mail, phone or personal announcement / visit</i>	<i>Organisation distributed paper copies</i>	<i>Organisation provided other means of assistance</i>
Helix North Side & Beaches Gay Group	Northern Beaches	√		
Hills District Lesbian Social Group	Hills District	√		
Wagga Wagga Women's Women	Wagga Wagga	√		
OW Northern Rivers	Lismore	√		
Wollongong Gay and Lesbian Solidarity Quoir	Wollongong	√		
<b>SOCIAL ORGANISATIONS</b>				
Exploring our gender	Sydney	√		
<a href="#">GL@M</a>	Sydney			
Parents with Pride	Sydney	√		
SGLBA	Sydney	√		
ISIS WEB	Sydney	√		
Rainbowsash	Sydney	√		
SCOG	Sydney	√		
Black, White and Pink	Sydney	√		√ • web link from their site
COAL	Sydney	√		
Lesbian Mothers	Sydney	√		
Sisters of Perpetual indulgence	Sydney	√		
WYLD	Sydney			
Three Sisters	Sydney	√		
Leather Pride	Sydney	√		
Lesbian News E-mail list	NSW	√		

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Lesbian Open House	Sydney	√		√ • sent information out in e-newsletter
Rainbow Babies	Sydney	√		
Older Dykes	Sydney	√		
Sydney Leather Men	Sydney	√		√ • advertised in newsletter
Lemons with a Twist	NSW	√		
Bi Pride Australia	NSW	√		
FTM Australia	NSW	√		
T-Femme Australia	Sydney	√		
Lesbian and Gay Psychology Interest Group	Sydney	√		
Butch and Femme	Sydney	√		
DIKE	Sydney			
Dykes on Bikes	Sydney	√		
Dream Discussion Social Group	Sydney	√		
The Foundry	Sydney	√		
Friendship Group	Sydney	√		
Gay Bridge	Sydney	√		
Bisexual network	Sydney	√		
Juicy Fruit	Sydney	√		
Australian FTM Personals	NSW	√		

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<b>BUSINESS AND PROFESSIONAL ORGANISATIONS</b>				
Pink Directory	NSW	√		√ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• distributed copies at social event – Pink Drinks, Oxford St</li> </ul>
The Business Women's Club	Sydney	√		
LAWLES – Lesbian Lawyers social group	Sydney City	√		
Literary Lesbians	Sydney	√		
The Professional Women's Club	Sydney	√		
<b>SPORTING AND RECREATIONAL ORGANISATIONS</b>				
Soccer Flying Bats	Sydney	√		
Sydney Harbour Gsquash	Sydney	√		
Surf DIVA	Sydney	√		
Sydney Spokes Cycling	Sydney	√		
Ten Pin Bowling	Sydney	√		
<b>MIGRANT AND RELIGIOUS ORGANISATIONS</b>				
Multi-Cultural Services Centre, FPA Health	Fairfield	√	√	√ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• distributed to variety of contacts</li> </ul>
HAMRA Support Network for Queer Arab Women	Sydney	√		
Sydney Asian Lesbians	Sydney	√		
Asian Lesbians	Sydney	√		
Assyrian Queers	Sydney	√		
Gay and Lesbian Immigration Task Force	Sydney	√		
LEMONAKIA Greek Dykes	Sydney	√		

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DAYENU	Sydney	√		
Mahasiddha Buddhist Centre	Sydney	√		
The Open Door	Sydney	√		
Seventh Day Adventist Kinship	Sydney	√		
Sydney Gay and Lesbian Catholics	Sydney	√		
Metropolitan Community Church	Sydney	√		
Uniting Network	Sydney City	√		√ • distributed information
<b>INDIGENOUS ORGANISATIONS</b>				
ACON Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Project	Surry Hills	√	√	
Australian Federation of AIDS Organisations, Indigenous Workers	NSW	√	√	√ • distributed through Indigenous Social Groups attached to AIDS Councils
NSW Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Sexual Health Workers network	NSW	√		
Queers for Reconciliation	NSW	√		
Linga Longa Aboriginal Philosophy Farm	Hastings Valley	√		
Birpai Local Aboriginal Land Council	Forster	√		
Bunyah Local Aboriginal Land Council	Forster	√		
Waminda Indigenous Womens Health Centre	Nowra	√		
Bindi Cultural Centre	Hastings	√		
Wirringa Baiya Aboriginal Women's Legal Centre	Marrickville	√		