

# QUEER WELFARE HANDBOOK



SYDNEY  
UNIVERSITY  
LAW SOCIETY

# Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the traditional Aboriginal owners of the land that the University of Sydney is built upon, the Gadigal People of the Eora Nation. We acknowledge that this was and always will be Aboriginal Land and are proud to be on the lands of one of the oldest surviving cultures in existence. We respect the knowledge that traditional elders and Aboriginal people hold and pass on from generation to generation, and acknowledge the continuous fight for constitutional reform and treaty recognition to this day. We regret that white supremacy has been used to justify Indigenous dispossession, colonial rule and violence in the past, in particular, a legal and political system that still to this date doesn't provide Aboriginal people with justice.

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# Foreword from the Queer Officer

Being part of the LGBTQIA+ community presents its own unique set of challenges both during university and on your journey into the legal profession. SULLS is committed in supporting all members of the wonderfully diverse community that makes up the LGBTQIA+ family, and I hope that this handbook will help any individuals who are struggling or looking for support.

This handbook is a resource for queer students to be able to anonymously and easily access information about support services both off and on campus. It features helpful information on discrimination as well as eight profiles from successful LGBTQIA+ legal professionals detailing their stories and advice for law students.

This handbook has been made possible by the extremely passionate and helpful SULLS Queer Portfolio Committee and the incredibly talented SULLS Design portfolio. I want to thank them and every legal professional who contributed to making this law school a more supportive and inclusive environment.

Eden McSheffrey, *SULLS Queer Officer 2020*

*This handbook is designed to be a quick reference guide for support services for the LGBTQIA+ university community. For more broad and comprehensive support information, the SULLS Student Support Services Handbook is a fantastic resource which has advice on financial assistance, scholarships, academic and professional support, wellbeing and safety. This can be found at <https://www.suls.org.au/publications>.*

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# LGBTQIA+ Discrimination

Community attitudes towards sexuality and gender identity have changed considerably over the years. However, discrimination and vilification against people in the LGBTQIA+ community still occurs. While the proportion of people who have witnessed homophobia in the workplace continues to decline, 1 in 3 LGBT people still witness homophobia at work; with transgender, intersex, and bisexual people significantly more likely to witness prejudice. Women are also less likely to be 'out' in the workplace than any other group.

Under the *Anti-Discrimination Act 1977* (NSW), it is illegal to discriminate against someone on the basis of their sex, gender identity, or sexuality. It is also against the law to vilify someone because of their sexuality, gender identity, or HIV status, and to treat someone unfairly because they have made a discrimination complaint.



## What can I do if I experience discrimination or vilification at Uni, or in the workplace?

The University of Sydney is committed to providing a safe and healthy workplace and learning environment that is free from bullying and unlawful harassment and discrimination. If you believe you have experienced discrimination because of your sexuality, gender identity, or HIV status, the *Students Complaints Procedures 2015* outlines how students can make a complaint, and how the complaint will be assessed by the Student Affairs Unit.

The Procedure can be accessed here: <https://www.sydney.edu.au/students/complaints.html>.

Anti-Discrimination NSW can also help. Anti-Discrimination NSW resolves enquiries and complaints, and raises awareness about discrimination and its impacts.

For more information, including how to lodge a complaint, visit: <https://www.antidiscrimination.justice.nsw.gov.au>.

# Support on Campus

The University of Sydney and Sydney Law School offer a myriad of support groups and services to students, including for LGBTQIA+ people and for mental health. Students have many opportunities to engage with a diverse and welcoming and affirming LGBTQIA+ community through these groups and services, as well as direct support from the SULS Queer Portfolio.

## Faculty Driven

### The Pride Network

The [Pride Network](#) is a network of LGBTQIA+ academic staff and students across the entire University of Sydney community, comprising all of the University's faculties. The group provides academic contact points for students who are in each respective faculty or portfolio, as well as some university residences. The Pride Network also hosts the University's contingent to Mardi Gras, a [dedicated Canvas page](#) where online events are held (ie. makeup tutorials, reading groups) and a blog.

To contact and find out more about the Pride Network, go to:

<https://www.sydney.edu.au/about-us/vision-and-values/diversity/pride-network.html>

## The University of Sydney Counselling and Psychological Services (CAPS)

The University of Sydney offers free Counselling and Psychological Services (CAPS) for students (undergraduate and postgraduate) at the University of Sydney. Services include [Individual therapy/counselling](#) with a clinical psychologist and [self-help resources](#) and [workshops](#).

Visit: <https://sydney.edu.au/students/counselling-and-mental-health-support.html>

You can contact CAPS on (02) 8627 8433 from 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday or complete the [CAPS booking form](#).

Email: [caps.admin@sydney.edu.au](mailto:caps.admin@sydney.edu.au)

Address: Level 5, Jane Foss Russell Building (beside Wentworth Building), Camperdown Campus.

Queer Space at Manning

The Queer Space in room G10, Manning House is an autonomous space open to all LGBTQ+ identifying and questioning students. It provides a safe place where every people who identify with the LGBTQ+ community can gather, discuss, and relax in an inclusive and supportive environment.

Find out more about the space at:

<https://www.usu.edu.au/uni-life/spaces.aspx>

## Student Run

### Shades

[Sydney University SHADES](#) is a student-run society for LGBTQ+ students. SHADES organises fun and engaging social events online and in-person ranging from trivia, movie, games nights, parties, speedfriending opportunities and is a space where LGBTQ+ students can socialise in an informal setting.

For more information head to:

<https://www.usu.edu.au/Clubs-Societies/Our-clubs-societies/Just-for-fun/Shades.aspx>

## SRC Queer Action Collective

An independent/autonomous activist group fighting for queer rights on campus and in the broader community. They meet weekly in the Queerspace, where they discuss how best to support the community, and ways to achieve their political goals.

For further information, go to:

<https://srcusyd.net.au/student-office-bearers/queer/>.

## SUPRA Queer Equity Network

A network for queer postgraduate students at the University of Sydney to chat and organise social events with each other. You can connect with the [Queer Postgraduates' Network](#) on Facebook.

If you have any queries about the Queer Postgraduates' Network or would like to raise some issues please contact SUPRA's Queer Officer: [queer@supra.usyd.edu.au](mailto:queer@supra.usyd.edu.au).

## SULS - Queer Portfolio

The SULS Queer Portfolio is an integral part of SULS, and runs a number of initiatives each year to ensure the law school remains committed to being inclusive and LGBTQIA+ friendly. Some of the initiatives the Queer portfolio runs throughout the year include the intervarsity Rainbow Moot, Queer Mentoring Program, Yemaya (Gender and Sexuality Journal), Queer Coffee Catchups and other social events, Panel events on LGBTQIA+ rights and policy and the ongoing 'Queries for the Queer Officer' initiative. Another key function of the Queer Portfolio is to bring queer presentation to the decision-making processes of SULS and to relay the concerns of the queer law student community to the law school administration. If you have any concerns or want someone to talk to about anything queer-related or otherwise please do not hesitate to reach out to the Queer Officer at [queer@suls.org.au](mailto:queer@suls.org.au).

If you'd like to be involved in these initiatives you can also apply to be a part of the Queer Committee or the Yemaya Editorial Committee!

## Legal Professional Profiles

The following are eight profiles from legal professionals across a wide variety of practices, jurisdictions and backgrounds. They have kindly shared their stories with us and have provided incredible advice for queer law students. We hope that any queer university students reading these profiles are reassured and inspired by their stories.

The SULLS Queer Portfolio is extremely grateful for their contributions and thanks them for their commitment to supporting the LGBTQIA+ community.



### Dr Senthoran Raj

Lecturer in law at Keele University, U.K

Thank you very much for taking the time to make this interview! Please tell us a little bit about yourself. How did your academic career start after graduating?

Just as a quick background, I did all of my degrees at Sydney University. I did both my B Arts/Law and PHD at Sydney. After I finished my law degree, I was really interested in researching LGBTQIA+ issues, I thought the best way for me to make an impact was through advocacy. I got a job in the UK and that's what I've been doing since!

What was your experience whilst doing the BA and PHD degrees at Sydney?

I was very lucky whilst at USYD to have great teachers and mentors. I was really inspired by fellow students and teachers who were really committed to social justice. When I was an undergraduate I used to edit Dissent, I did that back in 2009 when I was in my third year at law school. It was wonderful to be around students and academics who were passionate about human rights and social justice. When I did my postgraduate studies, I was particularly well supported by the Law school in funding, conferences and research. I was very lucky to have the support of the then-Dean Joellen Riley and Andrew Edgar and Professor Arlie Loughnan during my time at law school.

What has your experience, as an LGBTQIA+ person been like as a legal academic?

I have been very fortunate as I have been in spaces where I never had to hide my sexuality. One of the passions I have was around writing about how the law impacts those who are from racial, sexual or gender minorities. I was lucky in that in these different subject areas, I was encouraged to do further research. I became involved in the Gay and Lesbian Rights Lobby in my final year, and now I am working in a UK university. Universities are generally good places for LGBTQIA+ people in comparison with certain other formal, privatised workplaces. It is worth bearing in mind any intersecting difficulties that people may experience in tandem with their sexuality. I never had to be in the closet and was supported as an out legal academic.



## How do you overcome adversity within the spaces that you have been immersed in? What advice would you give to students who may experience discrimination?

The reason why I've been safe within the spaces I've been in is due to being surrounded by like-minded staff and students. As a point in general, universities do still harm LGBTQ+ people and historically, subjects that we teach now such as gender & sexuality and the law have been treated with suspicion and contempt, it was the courage of those who were willing to risk their job that this kind of safety that we enjoy is made possible.

So whenever someone ask me about navigating Law School is to actively look out to those communities such as the Queer Space and Queer Collective on campus, I got involved in Amnesty International and I'm still doing work with them since then 13 years on. So this is really key - finding spaces where you are comfortable with. There are disciplines where LGBTQ+ people are more accepted whereas others that are male-dominated, it may not be overt hostility but rather, you may be alienated in certain spaces. The collectives, student groups are essential in giving me the confidence that I so needed at the time.

## With the book that you released earlier this year, what are some takeaways that you think LGBTQIA+ law students may be able to incorporate into their own experience and thinking?

My work to date has been around "how do we engage people's experiences in the law and how do we make that matter", particularly with those who are marginalised and face inequality and discrimination. These were the kinds of issues that animated my PHD and ultimately became my book. I think at a very basic level my book speaks to the fact that as LGBTQIA+ people, but also more broadly, we have emotions and we have experiences, and we need to take those seriously. We also need to seriously consider how the law itself is bound by these emotions and experiences, and if we expose that, ie. what our lived experience actually is, then we can actually critically engage with what the law is capable of achieving. Of course, the law can't solve all our problems or answer every social inequity, and that's not to say the law doesn't have an important role to play – what it does mean is to think carefully about how we use the law and what we expect from the law. It is encouraging legal practitioners and students to think about their own emotions and not to reject the conversation as too irrational or something to be kept away from the mechanical teaching and doctrines taught in legal classrooms.

It does a disservice to us to think of the law as detached from emotions – I think we could do more good work within the law if we make that apparent. It's not necessarily about saying emotions are a good or bad thing, but mainly to acknowledge that it's happening.

## Give three pieces of advice to yourself if you were back in the first year of Law School tomorrow.

1. Follow your interests and passion, think about what motivates you. For example if you're interested in exploring how doctrines of equity affect women or same-sex couples unfairly, think about it, research it, develop your knowledge around it. Not only will this help you academically, but it can help you think about where you want to go in your future practice.
2. Find your community. Find people and spaces where you belong. It will motivate your your studies and is essential for your mental health.
3. Don't feel pressured into conforming to a particular stereotype because that's what you need to be 'really gay' or 'really trans' - we are all different and have different stories, and we don't have to express our gender or sexual identities in the same way to fit within the queer spectrum.

# Grace Wilkie

## Founder of Vaultd

### Tell us about yourself.

I practised as an estates lawyer at a firm called Dowson Turco Lawyers then as a commercial litigator at Hall & Wilcox lawyers. I don't think the hours lawyers work are a secret, so I've now stepped back from legal practice to give myself more time to focus on a company that I've founded.



### What have your experiences been like being LGBTQIA+ in the legal profession?

My experience in the profession has been positive, in that I have not faced overt discrimination. However, I have peers who've had awful experiences. Things like not getting cases after coming out at work because partners didn't want to work with 'a gay', or tokenistic firms who want to participate in LGBTQIA+ allyship for marketing purposes but don't want to engage meaningfully as an ally in case clients think it's a 'gay firm'.

I think a large part of my positive experience comes from carefully choosing who I want to work for. Dowson Turco Lawyers is an openly LGBTQIA+ owned firm. Hall & Wilcox caught my attention because of its commitment to innovation and when I looked more closely it had strong commitments to diversity and inclusion. It's always been really important that where I work aligns with my values and I think I've really benefited from this as an LGBTQIA+ person.

### How have you overcome adversity or discrimination? What advice do you have for anyone experiencing discrimination?

I came out in high school. I tended to keep my head down but there were a lot of snide comments and small incidents that made me really uncomfortable and I ended up dropping out. From there I sought out the LGBTQIA+ community, which helped me become comfortable in my own skin. I eventually went back to TAFE and then it was on to uni! Perhaps more a tool than advice, but when I experience discrimination I try to remind myself it's about them, not me. It reflects the poor values and small mind of the discriminator, and not a flaw of mine. Of course, it's easier said than done when you're living through the discrimination, but it's a touchstone that helps me.

You have recently launched an app that allows people to create and update their own will without a lawyer. Could you tell us more about how you started your own company?

The company I've founded is called Vaultd. When I first started working in the wills and estates space I didn't realise how important wills are, even for young people. I also appreciated how lucky I was to have the skills to draft my own because I certainly wouldn't be able to afford one myself or know where to start. I thought there must be an easier and more accessible option. When I couldn't find one I liked, I decided to make one... and voila, Vaultd was born. We are in the early stages, but I'm really excited to contribute to access to justice in some small way.

What advice would you give LGBTQIA+ law students/what advice would you give yourself if you were back in law school?

There are still pockets of super problematic culture that exist in the profession. My advice is to research where you want to work then speak with people who work/have worked there to gauge firm culture - and don't just speak with lawyers because you can learn so much from support staff too. Also, don't wait until you're a lawyer to start working somewhere you think will be good; take roles as paralegals, secretaries, service clerks etc.. I guarantee you'll find out pretty quickly whether you want to work there, plus you'll be getting industry experience.

I'd tell my law school self to relax a bit and enjoy the moment, the profession isn't going anywhere anytime soon.



## Paul Kidd

Lawyer at the Fitzroy Legal Service, HIV Justice Network Director and Victorian LGBTI Justice Working Group member

My journey into the law spans more than two decades, beginning in the early 1990s when I was living in Sydney. I was working for the Australian Government Solicitor, as a litigation paralegal. I liked my job, particularly as I got to do some court appearances, and I figured I take the next step and become a lawyer.

I enrolled in the Barristers' and Solicitors' Admissions Board 'Diploma in Law' course that runs out of Sydney Uni, a part-time 'night school' law qualification. Lectures ran at night, there were no tutes, just assignments and exams.

That went OK for me for a couple of years: I was passing my subjects, enjoying learning, working full-time on asbestos-related personal injury claims, and appearing in court every week.

The gay community in Sydney in the 1990s was intensely focused on responding to the AIDS crisis. It was a period of great sadness, but also a time of energy and, in spite of the escalating death toll, celebration.

I lost a lot of friends, sometimes several in the same week, so events like Mardi Gras and the big dance parties of that era took on a special significance as celebrations of our survival. I had been diagnosed with HIV in 1991, and as the years progressed, my health was waning. I knew, or thought I knew, that I didn't have much time left, so I quit my job and my studies.

After a few years, treatments got better and my health started to improve. I became involved in AIDS activism. In 2010, I went to the International AIDS Conference in Vienna and attended a meeting on HIV criminalisation. I realised this was an issue we had to do more about in Australia, so I made it my key focus as an activist. I had moved to Melbourne by this stage, and I was shocked to realise that Victoria had the highest rate of HIV-related criminal prosecution in Australia. I led a successful campaign for the repeal of section 19A of the *Crimes Act 1958* (Vic), a decades-old law that specifically criminalised HIV transmission.

I went back to law school in 2013, when I was 49. Initially, I thought I would do a subject or two, see how I went. I loved studying law and my lifetime experience made it easy for me to see the good and bad ways the law worked in practice. I graduated with first-class honours and I got a traineeship with Fitzroy Legal Service, one of Australia's first community legal centres. I'm still working there, now as a community lawyer at the Neighbourhood Justice Centre, Victoria's specialist therapeutic court.

I'm still involved in activism against HIV criminalisation, both in Australia and globally. The COVID-19 pandemic has helped to demonstrate the problems that arise when the criminal law is used to respond to a public health problem.

I also work on LGBTIQ law reform through the Victorian LGBTI Justice Working Group, which advises government on issues like birth certificate reform, ending conversion practices, and addressing systemic discrimination in institutions like police and prisons. In my day job I do criminal defence, family violence and tenancy work in a court that operates on therapeutic justice principles.

I've been incredibly fortunate to work in the government and CLC sectors, where I can be openly and honestly queer and HIV-positive without fear of discrimination. My life experience helps me understand the subtle ways that homophobia, transphobia and other forms of discrimination operate against LGBTQIA+ people and other minorities, and that makes me a better lawyer for every one of my clients.

Most readers won't have the same long path to the law that I have had, and won't start their careers with so much life experience. But every LGBTQIA+ person has a unique and powerful insight into structural inequalities, and those are things that lawyers challenge every day. Whatever area of law you work in, try to carve out a part of your practice that uses that insight and your privilege as a lawyer to move the world towards being a better place for the vulnerable, the marginalised, and the powerless.

# ANDREW PICKLES SC

## Barrister and NSW Bar Advocate for Change

Please tell us about yourself and where your career has taken you.

I started out as a solicitor at Freehills working in the environmental and planning team in my first rotation and then commercial litigation. I wanted to go back to doing planning law and there were few opportunities to go back to that group so I took a job with Mallesons in their planning and property group. Quite unexpectedly I then moved again to Phillips Fox (these days called DLA Piper) as there was a better opportunity for senior associateship and partnership in that firm. I stayed there for 3 years and became a senior associate, but I was doing lots of my own advocacy. It had not been my plan at the beginning, but a barrister in a judicial review case in the Land and Environment Court suggested that I should seriously think of going to the Bar. I had not given it too much thought before then, but the seed once planted, began to grow. I did the Bar exams in late 1998 and surprised myself by topping the exams for which I was rewarded with a set of robes.

At the Bar I started on a small floor where I had read with my tutor. In 2003 a number of colleagues with a similar practice area decided to start a new specialist floor and Martin Place Chambers was born. I took silk in 2015.

### What have your experiences been like being LGBTQIA+ in the legal profession?

My experiences as a gay man in the legal profession have been generally positive. Having said that, I was not out at Freehills in the beginning. While that firm was, even at that time, a generally accepting place, that did not mean it was easy to be 'out'. When I moved to Mallesons I felt more comfortable about starting from scratch as an open member of the LGBTQIA+ community and Phillips Fox was even more LGBTQIA+ friendly. When I went to the Bar I was terrified of the leap from a gay friendly environment to something far more conservative. In many ways, this was true, but probably more 'mind over matter'. The Bar has probably made great strides in this area in more recent years.



### How have you overcome adversity or discrimination? What advice do you have for anyone experiencing discrimination?

I cannot say that I have experienced overt discrimination that has had any adverse effect on my progress. That is not to say that it does not exist. I happen to work on a floor which has had many gay and lesbian members. My experience has taught me perhaps that being 'out' and visibly so is the most important thing. That does not mean waving a flag all the time, but it does mean being open. Doing so silences any tendency for homophobic chatter and it allows you to live your life without fear or hiding secrets.

### You are currently the NSW Bar Association's advocate for change in LGBTQIA+ diversity. What is some of the work you've been doing in this role?

As the NSW Bar Association advocate for change for LGBTQIA+ issues I have persuaded the Bar of the importance to connect to other LGBTQIA+ networks such as ACON's Pride in Diversity. I have also continued to foster connections with universities through the establishment of a mentoring program for LGBTQIA+ students as well as continuing a tradition of judging the Rainbow Moot.

### What piece of advice would you give yourself if you were back in law school?

Hard question, but first I think I would advise myself to do the subjects you want to do, and that are interesting. That applies not just to the law degree but any other degree. Doing what inspires is always a better recipe for success than doing things you think other people would want. Secondly, to come 'out' sooner and be 'out' at work from the start.



## Mia Yamamoto

### Criminal Defence Attorney and Civil Rights Activist

Please tell us about yourself and where your career has taken you!

I am a Japanese American male to female transgender lawyer. I was born in a WWII concentration camp for Japanese Americans. Graduated college in 1966, went into the army, served in Vietnam, came back to UCLA law school, started the Asian and Pacific Islander Law Student association (APILSA). Graduated 1971, worked at Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles, then worked as a public defender for the next 10 years before going into private practice. Today, I practice criminal defense and plaintiff's civil rights. I have started a number of organizations here in Los Angeles. I Founded the Multi-Cultural Bar Alliance, which started with 10 minority, womens' and LGBT bar associations. Founded the Asian Pacific American Bar Association of Los Angeles. I have been involved with and led many organizations here.

What have your experiences been like being LGBT+ in the legal profession?

As a legal professional my experience has been very good. I came out in 2003, had my surgeries in 2005, and my work, professional and community life have been wonderful. I was embraced by my community in ways I never expected. It's been far better than I ever anticipated.

Some of our students are interested in being civil rights lawyers. What could they do to prepare for and start such a career?

I work as a plaintiff's civil rights attorney and I believe the best preparation for civil rights work as well as a career in criminal defense is to work for the Public Defender's Office. representing poor people with criminal cases is the best preparation for civil rights work.

## How have you overcome adversity or discrimination in your life? What advice do you have for anyone experiencing discrimination?

Overcoming adversity means moving forward despite obstacles. The law is very conservative, by its nature. You have to be willing to put yourself out there and face whatever comes. My philosophy is to advocate for all oppressed people. Fight for the rights of all people, not just yourself. If you experience discrimination, it's difficult to fight back by yourself. You have to form alliances and partnerships in the profession. You have to belong to organizations which are devoted to ending bigotry, discrimination and hatred.

## What piece of advice would you give yourself if you were back in law school?

My advice to me is to believe, even when it looks impossible. There were no transgender lawyers when I came out, certainly not in California. And there were no transgender lawyers in the trial courts conducting jury trials. I had to be the first, not because I wanted to be, but because there were no others. I knew it was up to me to work hard and strive for excellence in every aspect of the work. It was the same when we were the first Asian Americans to come into the trial courts. We felt we had to be better than the White guys who were the rule when we came up. I felt the same about being the first transgender trial lawyer. I couldn't be just ok. I had to be excellent in order to prove that I (and we) belonged.





## Mel Keenan

### Public Sector Legal Professional

#### Please tell us about yourself

I am Principal Legal Officer in an independent State Government agency. Other than at the beginning of my legal career over nearly 20 years I have always been in various public sector legal roles.

I did my law degree in two 'stretches', the first at the University of Queensland straight out of school, where it really wasn't my bag. Then about ten years later I started up again at UNSW, which I really enjoyed - I had morphed into the kind of mature age student I hated when I was an undergrad!!

In the interim I finished my Arts degree at UQ & did Hons in History; lived in Dublin for a year in the '90s theoretically doing my MA, but really just drinking lots of Guinness; and was working as a native title historian when I finally graduated in law in 2000. I am currently nervously awaiting the result of the examination of my PhD thesis in law at Monash Uni.

#### What have your experiences been like being LGBTQIA+ in the legal profession?

I'm not aware of having been subject to any discrimination. However, the profession is very large and reflects a broad spectrum of views as we saw in the (disappointing) opposition to the Law Society's support of marriage equality.

My impression is that it's much easier in the public sector - I had gay & allied colleagues on a MG float this year - and that private practice might reflect NSW generally, so that it would be easier in the big city law firms than being the family solicitor in a country town.

#### How have you overcome adversity or discrimination in your career? What advice do you have for anyone experiencing discrimination?

As I said, I'm not aware of having been subject to any discrimination. The recent Dyson Heydon scandal has brought out in the public arena that sexual harassment is rife within the profession. So, I think that, as the profession aims to clean up its act, no one should suffer discrimination or harassment in silence.

Recently graduated or admitted solicitors might also like to get involved in the Law Society's mentoring program, for support and guidance. I mentored a recent grad last year and it was a great experience.

## What are some of the advantages of working in the public sector as a member of the LGBTQIA+ community?

I'm a huge supporter of lawyers choosing a public sector career. I'm currently on both the Government Solicitors Committee and the Public Law Committee of the NSW Law Society, which are really rewarding roles.

Public sector agencies tend to be forced to take seriously both diversity and flexible working, rather than just giving it lip service. I haven't witnessed any pressure on people to conform. At the moment, of course, COVID-19 is reshaping public sector legal work and the Courts. It's going to be a very different world.

More generally, there is a very wide range of legal, policy, or justice-related roles, so if you don't want to be a 70 hour+ a week litigator, you're likely to find your niche.

## What advice do you have for queer law students?

My advice for any law student is to try to enjoy Uni as much as possible - especially given what they're paying for it now! I think that my specific advice is that there is nothing to stop any queer student rising to the top of their profession if that's what they want to do. It's a far, far cry from when I was an undergrad in Brisbane in the 1980's.

Be out, be proud, be appropriately instructed!



## David Buchanan SC

### Barrister in Forbes Chambers

#### Who I am and what do I do?

I am a 68 year old barrister in Forbes Chambers in Sydney. I came to the Bar in 1977 and I was appointed Senior Counsel in 1997. I am a white gay man and I have a partner.

#### ANU in the early 1970s and My First Job

I went to a high school in Canberra and then did Arts/Law at the ANU. The Arts degree comprised history and political science. I enjoyed ANU Law School. There were a lot of public servants studying there part-time and I always considered myself lucky to be doing the course full-time. There were very few other gay students that I knew at the ANU in the early 70s. I started coming out at the end of my first year.

In 1975 I got a scholarship from the Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department to do ANU College of Law and, at the end of that, and after admission as a solicitor in Canberra and Sydney, I took a job in the (Commonwealth) Deputy Crown Solicitor's Office in Sydney. Moving to Sydney had the advantage that I could live in a city with a gay scene. In DCS, I was put into its Prosecutions section (this was before the DPP had been invented). I learned a lot about criminal advocacy.

#### Early gay political life

I spent most of my social life with straight friends and did political work with gay advocacy groups. I joined Gay Solidarity Group which had an inspiring membership and, in the late 1970s and early 1980s, I went to the early National Homosexual Conferences. At the first Mardi Gras, I attended the political march and rally organised by GSG in the morning but not the street party planned for the evening (I thought it too frivolous! – that's the sort of person I was then). But I got a call that night to go in and help deal with the police and organise bail for the women who had been arrested and were being held at Central police station. (Virginia Bell, then Director of Redfern Legal Centre, went to Darlinghurst police station to help get the men bailed out). It was great being at the bar table with a dozen or so other gay lawyers who came forward to volunteer legal representation for the arrestees.

## Gay organisation work

It would be fair to say that my sexuality has always been important to me. There was plenty of political organising and cutting-edge legal thinking and advocacy to do. But I got a lot of satisfaction from also working behind the scenes in the non-legal areas like preventative education, enlightening the medical profession, and other spheres – like helping organise ACON fund-raising dance parties. My work with ACON led to getting involved in similar work internationally– which in turn led to meeting and working with many brilliant people overseas, some gay and many straight, in HIV/AIDS and the law, and in HIV/AIDS community work generally – and I retain those friendships today.

I was involved in many of the political battles that occurred during my time to achieve equality – age of consent, anti-discrimination laws, sexuality hate crime (abolishing the so-called gay panic defence), etc. How did we do it? By organising. Seriously!

## Being LGBTIQ at the Bar

My experiences as an gay man in the legal profession have been largely fine. I am not the greatest attendee of social functions for LGBTIQ lawyers. There are many LGBTQ in the legal professions – though not, as far as I know, so many trans or intersex lawyers.

There are a number of LGB judges. As far as I can see, being queer is no obstacle to being appointed to the bench in NSW. There are obstacles – certain heads of jurisdiction for example have narrow views on the subject of their judicial officers being openly gay. Which does not prevent those judicial officers being openly gay. And, as you would expect, those heads of jurisdiction tend to have narrow views on a lot of things.

My experience has been that I am judged on my performance and my product, not my sexuality. The only time I have ever been abused in a courthouse for being gay was from a man who was probably the most notorious corrupt cop in the State and who won't be troubling anyone outside of gaol for a long time.

## What to do if you encounter discrimination

There are always boneheads around – people with narrow fields of vision and little enjoyment in their lives. They are in fact all around us. My advice for someone who is encountering discrimination in their career is to talk about it with colleagues and friends, to try to work out the best way of dealing with it. I don't believe that tackling discrimination head-on is always the best way – although in some cases it might be. There are all sorts of different ways of dealing with problems and it often helps to talk it through with others to work out the best way.

## What advice would I give myself if I were back at law school now?

Try to strike a balance in the tension between academic work and extra-curricular activities. There is nothing like a good education to set you up for life. I recommend joining GLRL – Gay and Lesbian Rights Lobby. There is plenty of work to do and a lot of it is right up the alley for a LGBTIQ lawyer or law student. But there are more radical organisations than GLRL and more conservative organisations too and others which have more of a welfare bent – any one of which may well appeal to you.



## Georgia Burke

Family Lawyer and Australian Lawyers for Human Rights LGBTI Co-Chair

### Please tell us about yourself and where your career has taken you

I undertook my legal education and began my legal career in Tasmania, progressing from the work experience clerk to an Associate at Ogilvie Jennings Lawyers between 2014 and 2019. I relocated to Sydney in early 2020 and commenced as an Associate with Holmes Donnelly & Co Solicitors in February.

I have always practised primarily in family law but maintained a smaller criminal law practice until late 2018, inclusive of family violence work, which provided me with useful cross-jurisdictional knowledge.

Outside of the office, I am fortunate enough to have had the opportunity to contribute to the legal community in a variety of roles. Currently, I am the Co-Chair of the LGBTI Subcommittee for Australia Lawyers for Human Rights alongside fellow Sydney-based lawyer Nicholas Stewart.

### What have your experiences been like being LGBTQIA+ in the legal profession?

On the whole, I have been pleasantly surprised. But I did enter the profession with significant apprehension as to what being “out” would be like, and it was a slow and ongoing process to feeling comfortable in bringing my whole self to work. As a family lawyer, I harboured a lot of worry about whether I would lose clients if they found out I was gay. It made me think about what was in the public domain – if I was googled, would it give it away? I was also unaware of any other young, queer women lawyers in private practice in Hobart, which was isolating at times. I was still grappling with my “pride”, and was concerned that being pocketed as “the lesbian lawyer” might affect my career.

There was a very specific moment when I gave this worry up. During the “YES” campaign, I was participating in a calling party even, and a news crew came to film some footage. Before I had time to think, I was interviewed, wearing a “YES” t-shirt. It was aired on the local news and...nothing bad came of it! A weight was lifted off my shoulders, and I felt empowered to take up a role in more publicly advocating for LGBTQIA+ rights. This then led to opportunities such as my role with Australian Lawyers for Human Rights, and discussions about inclusion within my firm and the broader profession.

## How have you overcome adversity or discrimination? What advice do you have for anyone experiencing discrimination?

In answering this question, I must first acknowledge my privilege and recognise how fortunate I am to have experience minimal direct discrimination as a result of being an LGBTIQ+ person. This is part due to my age and the progress that has been made for the community, even in the last 5-10 years. I must also acknowledge that as a white, cis woman, I do not risk discrimination at the same rate as First Nations LGBTIQ+ friends and colleagues, those of colour, or those who are trans or gender diverse. We must continue to advocate against discrimination in a way which prioritises those groups and intersections.

In terms of practical advice for any LGBTIQ+ person experiencing discrimination, my advice is to never think you're alone. If you don't have a friend or family member who you trust to speak to about the discrimination you're experiencing, reach out to the wealth of LGBTIQ+ support organisations out there who are ready to hear your story and provide you with resources. The internet is magic!

## You are currently the Australian Lawyers for Human Rights LGBTI Co-Chair. What is some of the work you've been doing in this role, and what advice would you give to people who want to stay involved in LGBTIQ+ advocacy as a practicing solicitor?

Australian Lawyers for Human Rights is an association of legal professionals active in practising and promoting awareness of international human rights standards in Australia. As one of the LGBTI Co-Chairs, I have been involved in issuing a myriad of media releases on issues pertaining to LGBTIQ+ rights; running inclusive language CLE; speaking on panels; and drafting submissions to various inquiries including those relating to ongoing debate around religious freedom/religious discrimination; and writing to politicians on issues including the One Nation Education Bill in NSW and birth certificate reform in Tasmania.

The latter is the work I am most proud of. The trans and gender diverse community in Tasmania had worked so hard fighting for this legislative change, but the media coverage was limited and what coverage there was failed to adequately engage with the human rights issues at stake. By adding ALHR's voice to the fantastic advocacy work already underway, we were able to get the ear of the members of the Tasmania Legislative Council, in whose hands the decision would lie. It was a great example of effective direct advocacy, and the power (and responsibility) that we have as lawyers to use our position in society to join with groups who might benefit from our assistance, in the hope of making positive change.

My advice is that if LGBTIQ+ advocacy is important to you, do not feel confined to what you can do in your day job. There are many legal and non-legal organisations you can get involved in and who will welcome any time you have to give.

## What piece of advice would you give yourself if you were back in law school?

That whilst study is important, the groups you're in, the connections you make, and the extra-curricular learning you do in and around law school will shape who you are as a lawyer for the better. So, work hard, but be involved. And the rest will work itself out.

# Support Off Campus

This section deals with a range of support services off campus for LGBTQIA+ people. These services range from counselling for LGBTQIA+ people, scholarships for LGBTQIA+ students to professional queer networking events and mentoring programs. There are also many LGBTQIA+ advocacy groups students can engage with off campus to help raise awareness of issues impacting LGBTQIA+ people.

## LGBTQIA+ Advocacy Groups

### ACON

ACON's vision is to be a global leader in community health, inclusion, and HIV responses for people of diverse sexualities and genders. They offer a range of services including LGBTQIA+ counselling and support, HIV counselling, substance support counselling, and a range of free workshops.

For further information, go to <https://www.acon.org.au/>.

### EndingHIV

EndingHIV is an ACON initiative focused on educating and supporting gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men to reduce HIV transmissions in NSW. Their website contains a range of information about sexual health, and you can book sexual health tests through the website.

For more information, visit <https://endinghiv.org.au/>.

### Equality Australia

Equality Australia runs campaigns on issues impacting LGBTQIA+ people. Current campaigns include calling for sexual orientation, gender identity, and sex characteristics questions to be added to the 2021 census.

To get updates on the latest news and ways you can take action, click <https://equalityaustralia.org.au/our-network/#take-action>

### Out For Australia

Out for Australia offers a queer mentoring program targeted at students and young professionals. They also offer networking and panel events, and the Out for Australia's 30 Under 30 Awards which recognises LGBTQIA+ people under the age of thirty who have made contributions to the LGBTQIA+ community.

For more information, go to <https://www.outforaustralia.org/>.

### A Gender Agenda Australia (AGA)

A Gender Agenda Australia is a non-profit organisation located in Canberra which works with the transgender, gender diverse, and intersex community. AGA works to raise awareness and understanding of the community, offers training, education, advocacy, and support services, and holds community gatherings with some open to the general public.

For more information, go to <https://genderrights.org.au/about-aga/>.

Email: [support@genderrights.org.au](mailto:support@genderrights.org.au)

### The Pinnacle Foundation

The Pinnacle Foundation is a scholarship fund and organisation founded in pursuit of improving LGBTQIA+ inclusion and educational equity. The organisation provides substantial named and multi-year scholarships to LGBTQIA+ Australian citizens and permanent residents who have a passion for LGBTQIA+ causes, social justice, hardship or overcame hardship related to their LGBTQIA+ identity and other equitable considerations.

For more information, go to: <https://thepinnaclefoundation.org/scholarships-2/>

## NSW Gay and Lesbian Rights Lobby

The NSW Gay and Lesbian Rights Lobby is an organisation, primarily led by volunteers, which advocates for LGBTQIA+ people and ending discrimination. The organisation lobbies politicians, policy makers, and government departments.

For more information, go to <https://glrl.org.au/about/>.

## Support Services

### Headspace

Headspace is the National Youth Mental Health Foundation which offers young people aged 12-25 health advice, support and information on a wide range of issues including general health, mental health, alcohol and other drug worries. The closest Headspace centre to campus is Camperdown.

P: (02) 9114 4100

A: Level 2, 97 Church Street Camperdown

E: [headspace.camperdown@sydney.edu.au](mailto:headspace.camperdown@sydney.edu.au)

## Beyond Blue

Beyond Blue is a mental health organisation, focused on supporting people affected by anxiety, depression and suicide.

The Beyond Blue website (<https://www.beyondblue.org.au/>) provides information for issues specific to LGBTQIA+ people, young people (12-25), women, men, multicultural people, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and new and expectant parents.

You can also get support from Beyond Blue by:

Calling 1300 22 4636 (24 hours / 7 days a week)

Chatting online with a professional via the [website](#) (3pm – 12am / 7 days a week)

Email (You will get a response within 24 hours)

Online community forum (24 hours / 7 days a week)

## Lifeline

Lifeline is a national charity which aims to provide all Australians experiencing emotional distress with access to 24 hour crisis support and suicide prevention services

To get in contact with lifeline:

Call 13 11 14 (24 hours / 7 days a week)

Visit: <https://www.lifeline.org.au>

## PFLAG (Parents and Friends of Lesbians And Gays)

PFLAG Australia is an organisation which supports the LGBTQIA+ community. PFLAG Australia offers monthly support meetings, maintains a library of books, pamphlets, and videos to increase awareness and understanding of homosexuality, publishes a monthly newsletter, offers an information telephone line, and advocates for LGBTQIA+ children to parliaments, politicians, and the wider community. PFLAG Australia aims to raise awareness of human rights, equality, inclusion, and social acceptance.

For more information, go to <https://pflagaustralia.org.au/about>.



## The Gender Centre INC

The Gender Center INC is a non-profit organisation located in Annandale which offers a variety of services for the transgender and gender diverse community. The Gender Center INC offers clients counselling and psychological support, accommodation services, case management services, tenancy support services, rural and regional support, and seniors support, among others.

For more information, go to: <https://gendercentre.org.au/services>.

## Bi+ Australia

Bi+ Australia provides counselling support for people who are attracted to more than one gender or questioning their attraction or sexuality. They also offer support to their families and loved ones. Services are provided via online video call and there is a fee to use this service.

For more information, go to: <https://www.biplusaustralia.org/>

Note: Bi+ Australia is temporarily closed. Bi+ Australia's counselling, research and education work will recommence in early 2021. For crisis support please contact Lifeline on 13 11 14 or QLife at [qlife.org.au](http://qlife.org.au).

## QLife

QLife offers free, Australia-wide LGBTQIA+ peer support services. Services include both telephone and webchat support and sessions are delivered by trained LGBTQIA+ community members.

For more information, go to: <https://qlife.org.au/>.

## Twenty10

Twenty10 offers a plethora of support services for LGBTQ+ youths ranging from mental health advice, sexual health, advocacy and emergency accommodation for vulnerable LGBTQ+ youth targeting those between 16-25. It also incorporates GCLS or Gay & Lesbian Counselling Service of NSW and thus also provides inclusivity training and consultation for businesses and organisations.

For more information, go to: <https://www.twenty10.org.au/contact-us/>  
Email: [info@twenty10.org.au](mailto:info@twenty10.org.au)



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