

## WE DON'T TALK ABOUT IT – TEENAGE GAY SUICIDE

A close friend of mine was shocked to hear of a known and liked local 18-year-old gay boy committing suicide, living on . What drives young teenage gay boys to do this? Why are gay teenagers more likely to do this than gay adults? Why are gay teenagers eight times more likely to attempt suicide than straight teenagers and what stops it being reported in the media?

It is said that suicide is a permanent solution to a temporary dilemma. The truth is everything passes in time but time isn't something teenagers feel they can handle because their pre-frontal lobes, the reasoning part, has not yet been fully developed until 25 years of age. They don't think past the present dilemma because they are less able to.

Yes, gay teenagers are a staggering 8 times more likely to attempt suicide than their straight mates. But suicides go unreported for the fear of inciting others to follow suit – copycat action. This seems a very old and odd way to deal with this human tragedy. Without awareness, where is the need for education programmes that encourage teenagers to seek help, to ease the devastating feelings of loneliness and inform them of their predisposition to encounter suicidal thoughts? Is it really doing gay teenagers any favours by keeping suicide a big secret?

, "I grew up in the - you may have heard of it. It's also the place this ballet-dancing, glitter-hurling, friend-of-Dorothy writer grew up. smashed my windows, turned my school bag inside out, and when I held the hand of the first guy who *"like liked"* me, he hurled a fistful of cement at my head. It's suburbs like this that can offer insight into why certain young people come to believe that the best option is to end it all; that in their moment of unliftable loneliness, a son or daughter becomes convinced that, because of the love welling up inside them, it is better to die than to hope for a happy future."

Wow strong words! It is hard to believe that in this year 2014 with Mardi Gras, footballers like Ian Roberts coming out proud and GLBT leaders like Andrew Purchas (Fuzz), from the Convicts, kicking goals encouraging the AFL, NRL, Soccer Australia and the Australian Cricket Association to adopt non homophobic policies , that the message hasn't got through - it is okay to be gay and a teenager. But it hasn't.

A bit more form , "Isolation, discrimination and awkwardness with teachers or doctors, combined with regular growing pains all teenagers face, take an additional toll on the young person still coming to grips with why they like the "wrong" gender."

Who makes gay teenagers feel they are the "wrong gender"? Well at that teen age it seems a lot of people do, including our politicians who still do not think it is a basic human right to endorse gay marriage, whether we individually want it or not. Not approving gay marriage sends but another negative message to gay teenagers.

Research proves we understand we are attracted to the same sex around 9 or 10 years of age. The same applies to straight people about their orientation. But does anyone ask a straight person, "So when did you come out as straight?" They would be shocked to be asked such a question, as it is just who they are. Our sexuality is determined at a very early age, gay or straight, and we should be allowed to be who we are - and for it to be seen as right and as equal as anyone. Being gay and seeing life from this perspective can be truly a unique and exciting experience. Ask any older gay person if they wish they were any different!

In multi-cultural Australia there are many cultural differences and many suburban negative attitudes towards human sexuality. We know, most of this bigotry it is based purely on ignorance of what it is to be human on this planet – humans have different sexuality expressions, it is not just heterosexual.

So what do I want in this debate. Well a lot actually. I want bigger and better discussions on a regular basis about suicide in general. I am not convinced that keeping it all a secret by not reporting it is doing the cause to save our teenagers any favours. The shock of so many gay teenagers dying should galvanize Australians to do something about this terrible human waste that affects so many others after the act. There are many fronts to tackle but having it all in the open is so much better than hiding its occurrence. We can't fight the enemy we can't see!

If any GLBT teenager is out there worrying about their sexuality we are all here to help as we have all been where you are today – teenagers. Feel free to email me for any advice or contact details. You are not alone. Search the Internet tonight.

Lifeline 13 11 14

Ring 000

Kids Help Line 1800 55 1800 [www.kidshelp.com.au/](http://www.kidshelp.com.au/)

Gay Teenagers websites: In NSW <http://www.twenty10.org.au/>

QLD <http://gayandlesbiancounselling.com/>

VIC <http://www.comingout.com.au/>