

Beyond Compliance

The AFP's Gay and Lesbian Liaison Officer Network

Since the 1960s, there has been an increasing awareness that diversity in our community presents challenges to the historical "norms" of society. In this age of enlightenment, it is perhaps easy to forget that progress has been hard won. In the gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex communities, as in many other fields, the AFP is proud to be at the forefront of tolerance and acceptance.



By Federal Agent Alan Scott

The AFP Gay and Lesbian Liaison Officer (GLLO) Network commenced as a pilot scheme in 1996, operating from City Police Station in the ACT. Two AFP members, Constables Wayne Severs and Sue King, began what was then known as the Gay and Lesbian Contact Officer (GALCO) program. At a time when most programs of this kind in the Australian States and Territories were formed on an informal basis by police employees, the AFP GALCO program received direct support and funding from AFP management.

One month after the formation of the GALCO program its value was demonstrated to police investigations when a Canberra-based medical practitioner servicing the gay community was murdered in Yass. The GALCO program was able to support the investigation team by liaising with the gay community and obtaining information relevant to the murder investigation.

In 2001, the GALCO pilot program became known as the GLLO Network in order to conform

to the emerging national liaison officer program across all Australian police jurisdictions. The AFP network now has approximately 50 trained, sworn and unsworn GLLOs, about half working in ACT community policing with the remainder working in AFP national roles.

The focus of the GLLO Network is to provide services relating to the gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex (GLBTI) communities. The GLLO Network supports the AFP's Worklife Diversity program within the People Strategies portfolio. General Manager Southern Federal Agent Graham Ashton is patron of the GLLO Network.

Why is there a need for the GLLO Network?

Since the 1960s, there has been an increasing awareness that diversity in our community presents challenges to established 'norms'. In Australia, this has been particularly apparent in relation to the position of women, ethnic communities and indigenous Australians. While a great deal has been done through legislative intervention, it is important to realise that, while the law can control outward manifestations of discrimination and prejudice, it



Photo by Brian Hartigan

is limited in relation to altering perceptions and stereotypes. In this sense, networks within the AFP are able to develop the broad philosophy that underpins legislative ideals and apply them in a more hands-on and practical sense.

In accordance with the AFP's commitment to diversity in the workplace, the GLLO Network strives to promote a culture within the AFP that goes beyond mere compliance with statutory controls. Indeed, the AFP GLLO motto is *beyond compliance* which signifies the network is committed to fostering a culture of greater understanding of GLBTI issues in the workplace.

The gay and lesbian community has traditionally been misunderstood and marginalised by lawmakers and the community at large. This has given rise to a number of stereotypes about the behaviour and lifestyles of this group. No doubt these stereotypes also stem from the social stigma previously associated with being gay or lesbian which often marginalised the group in the wider community.

Law enforcement has been seen as a traditional adversary of the gay and lesbian community because of their involvement in prosecutions for "offences against the order of nature". Even though the laws relating to gay and lesbian sexual activity have changed in the Australian States and Territories, traditional animosities between this community and the police have been difficult to ameliorate. Accordingly, one of the main objectives of the GLLO Network is to build bridges with the GLBTI community.

Naturally, this is particularly important in relation to the crime-prevention work being undertaken by the AFP in its community policing role in the ACT.

What do GLLOs actually do?

All GLLOs undertake a comprehensive three-day training program which enables them to engage in a range of activities. The training program includes sessions from members of the GLBTI community who share their experiences with prospective GLLOs, giving them an insight into the issues from a community perspective.

Support for AFP employees

GLLOs are able to provide advice to AFP employees who may wish to know more about GLBTI issues. They may be able to assist employees who identify as GLBTI but are having difficulties coming to terms with the issue. This is commonly referred to as coming out and can be a very difficult time for some people. This support may also take the form of assisting employees who have suffered some form of harassment in relation to their sexuality. In this sense, it is important to note that a number of GLLOs are also trained as confidants within the AFP Confidant Program. GLLOs are also able to assist employees who may have a friend or a family member in the GLBTI community.

Support for AFP investigations

GLLOs are able to provide advice to underpin AFP investigations that touch on GLBTI issues. The investigation into the murder of doctor Peter

AFP and
APS Gay and
Lesbian Liaison
Officers gather
in Sydney in
preparation for
the annual Gay
and Lesbian
Mardi Gras



Photo by Brian Hartigan

Rowlands in Yass in 1996 is testimony to the benefits that can flow from a GLLO Network that has the support of the community. The GLLO Network is also working on a number of policy initiatives to support AFP investigations, including:

- guidelines for dealing with the investigation of gay rape; and
- the development of search procedures and guidelines to be applied when searching GLBTI people – current legislative provisions only stating that a person is to be searched by a member of the same sex.

Advice to AFP management

The GLLO Network is in a unique position to advise AFP management in relation to GLBTI issues. The network has already provided a detailed briefing of its activities to the Transnational Crime Management Team (TCMT) and staff in Northern Office. One project currently being undertaken by the GLLO Network on behalf of general managers is the development of recruitment strategies that encourage

people from the GLBTI community to apply for employment in the AFP. These strategies are based on the premise that there are many things that will prevent someone from being an AFP employee – their sexuality should not be one of them. This means nothing more than that the AFP is looking for the best quality employees without clouding that search with irrelevant considerations such as sexual orientation.

The AFP is a member of the Australian New Zealand Equal Opportunity Consultative Committee (ANZEOCC). In 2001, this multi police jurisdictional body recommended Police Commissioners recognise the requirements associated with the recruitment, retention and employment practices on gay, lesbian, transgender and intersex members. Australasian Police Commissioners endorsed the establishment of a national gay and lesbian advisory committee, which would include a delegate from each police jurisdiction and members of the GLBTI community. The GLLO Network will provide strategic advice regarding agenda issues for this committee.

AFP and APS Gay and Lesbian Liaison Officers enjoy a festive atmosphere and a very welcoming spectator reaction during the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras in Sydney's Taylor Square

“The GLLO Network strives to promote a culture within the AFP that goes beyond mere compliance with statutory controls.”

Mardi Gras

What began as a routine raid by the New York Police Department on a popular Greenwich Village gay bar in 1969 developed into violent protests as patrons resisted police. The backlash against police that ensued over the next three nights – known as the Stonewall Riots – is often identified as the beginning of the gay liberation movement in the United States and a heightened awareness of the issues that surround gay men and lesbians throughout the world. Nine years later in Sydney, a protest group of approximately 1000 people marched down Oxford Street under the banner International Gay Solidarity Day commemorating the Stonewall riots. While a permit had been granted by the New South Wales Police authorising the march, it was rescinded at the last minute.

The march went ahead and some violence ensued, leading to a number of arrests. Following that night, many claims were made about the alleged inappropriate response by police. This event is identified as Australia’s equivalent to the Stonewall Riots and signifies a turning point in gay politics and the reform agenda in this country. The march continued each year and, in 1988, became known as the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras.

While the political flavour of the march has remained, in recent years the Mardi Gras has adopted a more festive approach to celebrating diversity in the community. Twenty years after the original protest, the New South Wales Police participated in the parade for the first time, represented by members of the New South Wales Police GLLO Network.

The AFP (including GLLOs) has marched in the Mardi Gras for several years as a part of the Canberra Community float. The AFP’s participation in this event is based on an acknowledgment of diversity in the community and an awareness that we need to understand the issues that face the community we police.

By marching in the Mardi Gras, the AFP sends a powerful message of support to the GLBTI community and provides an opportunity to advertise the existence of the GLLO Network.

Who can be a GLLO?

Subject to the successful completion of the training package, all AFP employees are eligible to be a GLLO. It is important to note that, while approximately half of the current GLLOs

GLBTI – what does it all mean?

G – stands for gay men – men who are sexually attracted to other men. Most gay men prefer this expression to the more clinical term homosexual. Certainly, gay men do not appreciate the titles poofster or faggot. Interestingly, the word queer, which has been used to refer to gay men as being divergent, is now sometimes used by legal theorists when describing what they call queer legal theory.

L – stands for lesbian – women who are sexually attracted to other women. The term has its origins in the island of Lesbos in Greece which was allegedly inhabited only by women. Some women prefer to be called gay as an all-encompassing word referring to gay men and women. Lesbians are sometimes colloquially referred to as dykes, although this expression can be construed as derogatory and should be used with caution. Dykes on bikes, meaning lesbians who ride motorbikes, have been popular at the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras for a number of years.

B – stands for bisexual – men and women who are sexually attracted to both sexes.

T – stands for transgender – a man or woman who identifies as being the gender opposite to their birth sex. It does not necessarily follow that they are same-sex attracted or are involved in dressing as the opposite sex.

I – stands for intersex – a reference to a medical condition where the sexual identity of a person is not conclusive. Some babies have a chromosomal structure that does not conclusively indicate whether they are a boy or a girl. Some doctors believe that, in such cases, a child’s sex can be assigned by surgery, hormone treatment and the parents raising the child as the assigned sex. This belief is challenged by a large number of people from the intersex community.



Photo by Brian Hartigan

identify as being in the GLBTI community, it is not a prerequisite to becoming a GLLO.

The pink triangle and rainbow flag

The emblem for the AFP GLLO Network is an amalgamation of the police chequered band, the pink triangle and the rainbow flag. All AFP GLLOs in uniform wear a GLLO badge so that members of the community can easily identify them.

The pink triangle has its origins in the Second World War when it was used by the Nazi regime as a way of identifying gay men. During the war, thousands of men were sent to Nazi concentration camps simply because they were gay. The Nazis modified an existing law so that a mere suspicion of homosexuality was sufficient to attract legal sanction and imprisonment.

Along with Jews, the disabled and the political opponents to the Nazi regime, gay men were routinely interned in concentration camps. Recent research indicates that these men may have been subject to horrific medical experiments.

Just as the Nazis identified Jews with a Star of David sewn onto their clothing, homosexual men were identified by a pink triangle. And so the pink triangle was born as a symbol that identifies the oppression of sexual minorities.

In an ironic twist, the gay and lesbian movement of today has appropriated this symbol of oppression and converted it to a symbol which represents gay pride.

The rainbow flag is used by the GLBTI community to symbolise pride, hope and diversity.

The future

While groups like the GLLO Network and others such as National Women's Consultative Team and the Malunggang Indigenous Officers' Network have a very important role to play today, their ultimate goal must surely be to work themselves out of existence. In a utopian world, issues of inequality and bias would not exist – therefore, lobbying becomes redundant. Time and the goodwill of progressive organisations such as the AFP will close the gap.

AFP and APS Gay and Lesbian Liaison Officers fly the flag during the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras in Sydney