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Officer: Anita Griffin
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Copy to:

- Direct reply - a copy of your response would be appreciated.
- Information.
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18 JUN 2007

Mr J Punch AM
Coming Out Proud Program Steering Committee
'Baanya'
2001 Old Huon Road
LONGLEY TAS 7150

Dear Mr Punch

Thank you for your letter of 5 March 2007 raising your concerns about the needs and issues of sexually and gender diverse people in local and regional Tasmania. I apologise for the delay in responding.

A consistent theme running through your concerns is the importance of consultation between the gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex (GLBTI) community and government to make sure services are provided in a more appropriate and effective way and to improve awareness of sexual and gender diversity within the workplace.

One of the key aims of the *Whole-of-Government Framework for Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex Communities* (the Framework) is to ensure effective consultation – at both a whole-of-government and individual agency level – in relation to policies and services, and diversity awareness in the workplace and in delivery of services.

In recognition of this, my Department has agreed to arrange and fund a facilitated meeting for representatives of organisations that provide services or advocacy for GLBTI people. The aim of this meeting is to help the GLBTI community reach agreement on how it will engage with the GLBTI Whole-of-Government Reference Group, which is chaired by the Department of Premier & Cabinet.

I look forward to the outcomes from this meeting, as the effectiveness of consultation by the Government Reference Group with the GLBTI community can only be enhanced by an integrated and coordinated approach from the GLBTI community. In the meantime, I have referred your letter to the Government Reference Group, and I anticipate that the meeting outcomes will help guide it when it is considering the issues you identified in your letter to me.

In regard to the importance of improved diversity training, this is a matter of significance across the State Service. The GLBTI Government Reference Group considered this issue at its meeting on 9 May 2007, and is already actively considering how it can update the 'Sexually and Gender Based Discrimination Checklist' attached to the State Service Commissioner's Direction No. 3. Raising the awareness among State Service employees of sexual and gender diversity, will not only improve the responsiveness of service delivery to GLBTI people, but will enhance acceptance of, and opportunities for, GLBTI people employed or wishing to be employed by the State Service.

As you know, the Framework established the Government Reference Group to advise senior Agency representatives and Cabinet Ministers on planning and policy development at a strategic whole-of-government level, as well as to oversee and report on the implementation of the Framework. In relation to specific local issues that the Coming Out Proud Program (COPP) Steering Committee has identified, these would be best addressed by individual service delivery agencies with the relevant expertise. I encourage you to make use of the Agency GLBTI reference/liaison groups within the Departments of Police & Emergency Management, Education and Health & Human Services, which I understand now include COPP representation, to negotiate appropriate State Government responses and services at local and regional levels.

I note the significant work that the COPP Steering Committee is doing to engage Local Government in addressing local and regional issues of GLBTI communities, through the establishment of Community Liaison Committees in several municipalities. I acknowledge that although the Framework represents what the State Government can do to address issues of concern to GLBTI communities, there is also much that can be done by other levels of government and the community to improve awareness of the needs and problems faced by sexually and gender diverse people.

To that end, Michelle O'Byrne, as the Minister assisting me with Local Government, will write to all local councils about the State Government's Framework, and encourage them to consider what actions they can take at a local level to complement the Framework.

I thank you for writing to me on this matter.

Yours sincerely

Paul Lennon
Premier