Early Childhood Education Conference
Rainbow Families

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(More) about me!
About today

- Rainbow Families – Big Picture
- Legal recognition
- What’s different for us?
- Challenges for families
- Challenges for services
- Mothers’ Day, Fathers’ Day and more!
Rainbow Families Annual Picnic
Rainbow Families – Big Picture

- Changing societal attitudes – increased acceptance of non-traditional families.
- Changing culture within the LGBT community.
- Changing law – increased legal recognition of same-sex attracted couples.
- Decreased legal impediments to same-sex couples accessing fertility treatment.
- Greater awareness of surrogacy services locally and overseas.
Canberra!

- Increased awareness of rainbow families as a result of the campaign for Marriage Equality.
Same-sex female couples are assumed to be their children’s legal parents provided they were in a ‘domestic partnership’ when the children were conceived and the non-birth mother consented to the treatment procedure that resulted in conception (2008).

The name of the non-birth mother can be recorded on a birth certificate.
Legal recognition of LGBT families (2)

- Altruistic surrogacy is permitted in Australia, but commercial surrogacy is not.

- In Australian altruistic surrogacy arrangements the names of two fathers can be recorded on a birth certificate through a Substitute Parentage Order (SPO).

- No more than two people are legally recognised as a child’s parents.
Legal recognition of LGBT families (3)

- Known donors are not currently recognised as parents, but may be recognised as a having an interest ‘significant to the care, welfare and development’ of the child.

- Records of sperm donors are kept and children can access these when they turn 18, or before with mutual consent. In Victoria, all donors must be ‘Identity Release’.
“Donor Dave”
What's (not) different for us? (1)

Many similarities with heterosexual parents:

- Adjusting to parenthood – settling, sleeping and feeding.
- Managing stress and fatigue – less time for the relationship.
- Balancing work, life, and (extended) family.
- Dealing with on-going issues – nits, homework and screen time!
What’s different for us? (2)

- Non-birth mothers may experience insecurity or anxiety, especially in the early days.

- Issues of bonding and roles may be particularly significant.
What’s different for us? (3)

• LGBT parents are more likely to have difficult/estranged relationships with their own families of origin.

• LGBT parents may have less support from their extended families, although children may also draw families together.
‘Poster parents’: LGBT parents may feel pressure to be ‘better than the rest’ and may have difficulty acknowledging they are not coping.

Co-parenting relationships involving more than two parents are increasingly common within the LGBT community.

Same-sex couples may manage household tasks more evenly, and experience less tension in relations to the division of labour than heterosexual couples.

In the last two years, the LGBT community has experienced ‘minority stress’ as a result of public debate around marriage equality, the plebiscite and safe schools.
Marriage Equality Postal Survey
Marriage Equality Postal Survey

**The Facts**
- There are many figures on several pages that discuss the implications of same-sex marriage.
- The survey examines the attitudes and beliefs of various groups regarding same-sex marriage.

**Outcomes**
- A YES vote for "same sex marriage" will most likely have the following outcomes:
  - School curricula will incorporate "same sex marriage".
  - Boys will be taught they could marry boys.
  - Girls will be taught they could marry girls.
  - Sex education will outline:
    - Boy-to-boy sex and
    - Girl-to-girl sex.
  - Parents who object will be informed their view does not count. It is the law.
  - The number of girls becoming mothers without having a mother will increase.
  - The number of boys becoming fathers without having a father will increase.

**Vote Against ‘SAME SEX MARRIAGE’**

Authorised by Hon. Chris Miles
PO Box 823 Willunga, SA 5173
And some light relief...

SAME SOX.

You see these appalling.
Same-socks couples, getting
about in the shopping mall.

He's got green socks,
She's got green socks.
OH YUK!

The next day, in the
coffee shop - there they
are again: the same-socks
couple, grinning like hyenas!

There they are -
as large as life: making a
complete mockery of couples
who wear different socks.
SO FLAGRANT, 
SO CAREFREE, AND SO
DEEPLY INFURIATING.

This time they're both
wearing RED socks.
It's SO depressing.

AND GUESS WHAT?!!
The government
couldn't give a damn.
IT'S A DISASTER!
Challenges for families accessing services

- LGBT people often experience anxiety when accessing a new service.
- They may worry about being asked invasive, insensitive or inappropriate questions.
- They may wonder whether you will fully understand the role played by both partners.
- They may feel frustrated at having to educate you about LGBT issues.
- They may be anxious about dealing with any possible discomfort or judgment or lack of understanding on your part.
- They will want reassurance that referrals are LGBT friendly.
Challenges for services

- A lack of ‘cultural competence’ in working with LGBT families and anxiety about asking the wrong questions or ‘saying the wrong thing’.

- A lack of understanding about the role of non-biological parents and how best to include and affirm them.

- Not having space to talk openly about concerns around same-sex parenting for fear of offending people.

- A policy of ‘treating everyone the same’ so there is no space for a specific focus on inclusivity for LGBT families.

- Intake processes and forms cannot accommodate same-sex partners – “The computer says ‘No’”.
Mothers’ Day and Fathers’ day

“I have two mommies. I know where the apostrophe goes.”
Family Tree

who is in your family?

- one dad
- two mums
- mum and dad
- co-parents
- one mum, two dads
- two mums, one dad
- extended family
- foster family
- step-families

our families come in all different shapes and sizes.

There are many different ways to describe a family. A family is a group of people who are related by blood, marriage, adoption, or other social ties. All families are unique, and there is no one “right” way to describe a family. Some families are nuclear, meaning they are made up of a mother, a father, and their children. Other families may include grandparents, uncles, aunts, cousins, or other relatives. Some families may also include same-sex couples or single parents. It is important to respect and appreciate the diversity of families and to not make assumptions about who is in a family based on appearance or gender. It is also important to use respectful language and avoid making negative judgments about families that may be different from our own. 

The Family Book

Todd Park

rainbow families council

For information and resources visit www.rainbowfamilies.org.au.
“You can’t have two mummies/daddies”

- You can explain Rainbow Families without talking about sex!

*I always thought that was just a figure of speech.*
Gay dads (1)
Gay dads (2)
“This centre welcomes and supports all children and parents regardless of race, nationality, religion, sexual orientation or gender identity.”
What services can do (1)

- Provide indications that the day care, kinder, centre, is LGBT friendly by including all things rainbow!
What services can do (2)

- Door opening questions: Can you describe your family to me? Who are the significant people/carers in your child’s life? Tell me about your family life? How does your day to day life work?

- Ensure intake forms and other documentation are inclusive and allow people to disclose information about themselves if they wish.

- Where possible, let parents tell you about their relationship/family. Rainbow families are all different and it’s best not to guess or assume.

- Ask questions that openly acknowledge each partner as a parent and that are affirming and inclusive.
Don’t worry if you don’t know who is the biological parent and who isn’t. If a patient feels the information is important, they will tell you.

If the biology or genetics are important, ask. Which of you you is the biological parent?

Start a conversation amongst staff about how best to support LGBT parents and families and provide opportunities for staff who are less comfortable with LGBT families to share their concerns.

Provide professional development training for staff to ensure they are supportive, well-informed and confident working with LGBT families.
Think big! Rainbow Tick Accreditation

Developed by GLHV to help services become fully-LGBTI inclusive.

- Organisational capacity
- Workforce development
- Consumer participation
- A welcoming and accessible organisation
- Disclosure and documentation
- Culturally safe and acceptable services
There was one kinder where we both found the teacher really cold and stand-offish and I wondered whether that was the whole lesbian thing. I think probably our anti-gaydar was working subliminally. **Ruth**

If the staff read her a book they will change mummy and daddy to mummy and mama. **Ell**

A couple of people probably thought we were interesting and that they might like to get to know us because we were different – because we were a lesbian couple – and then they found out we were just as normal as everyone else. **Ruth**
At pre-prep, the manager of that section was very inclusive and said, ‘Tell me what books you want and we’ll go and buy them’. So they’ve got lots of books that they just toss in with the others and the kids can pick up a book about mum and dad or mum and mum. Jenny

We chose the kinder because it was down the road from my work. We both had a look around and we had a conversation about the fact that we were a same-sex family. The Director was very honest and said that they hadn’t dealt with a same-sex family before, but that they were open to working with us to make sure our needs were met. Nicola

Lucy, my daughter, has a kinder that she goes to now and we’ve been educating the kinder teachers all year. Alison
• Studies in Australia and internationally have consistently shown that children who have same-sex-attracted parents do just as well as other children emotionally, socially and educationally (Dempsey 2013)

• The Australian Study of Child Health in Same-Sex Families (ACHESS) by Dr Simon Crouch collected data on 500 children aged 0-17 years. Study findings show there were no statistically significant differences between children raised in same-sex families and other children on any health measure except...
Outcomes for our children (2)

- ...on measures of general health and family cohesion, children aged 5 to 17 years with same-sex attracted parents showed a significantly better score when compared to Australian children from all backgrounds and family contexts.

- Australian children with same-sex attracted parents and their families continue to face discrimination in a variety of contexts. Children growing up in same-sex household are resilient, developing well in the face of discrimination (Crouch 2012).
“No statistically significant differences”
What’s it like for the kids?

- Local community (Josh Frydenberg) is extremely supportive.
- Never had problems with other kids being friends or having sleepovers.
- Kids have experienced no bullying.
- They’ve had questions: “How come you’ve got two mums?”
- Corin had to deal with “That’s so gay!” in Grade 5.
- Well connected with other rainbow families.
- Greater understanding of diversity and inclusion.
- Resilient and understand that the problem is ‘them’ not ‘us’.
IDAHOBIT Day

[Image of two girls wearing t-shirts that say "SOME PEOPLE ARE GAY" and "THANKS FOR COMING""]
“That’s so gay” and other insults!
Final thoughts...

- Don’t be scared about ‘saying the wrong thing’. LGBT people will generally notice and appreciate it if you just assume they are a family and treat them as such.

- Don’t underestimate how powerful it can be for a LGBT parents when a service provider makes some simple gestures that indicate they acknowledge and respect their relationship.
Outspoken Families: A resource kit for rainbow families

Download the complete kit here.
Email: jacqueline_tomlins@bigpond.com
Web: www.jacquitomlins.com
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