

*Many people feel uncomfortable about homosexuality, and yet there are things they still wish they knew.*

*In writing this leaflet we have made every effort to present accurate information. We offer it from our background knowledge and the experience of having gay sons, daughters and friends. We hope you will find it helpful.*

*If you would like more information, look on the back page of this leaflet for our contacts and website.*

## **QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**

### **What is homosexuality?**

It is a lasting emotional, romantic, affectionate sexual attraction to people of the same sex. This may, or may not be expressed in sexual behaviour.

### **How many Gay men and Lesbians are there?**

Recent Australian and New Zealand studies suggest that about 11% of the population is not exclusively heterosexual. Some of these will be exclusively same sex attracted, while others will have some homosexual attraction or experience.

### **Is Homosexuality a mental illness or emotional problem?**

Homosexuality is not a mental disorder. It was once thought to be so, but in 1973, the American Psychiatric Association stated that homosexuality was neither a mental disorder nor emotional problem. It is a natural state for gay and lesbian people.

### **What determines a person's sexual orientation?**

Although there have been many theories, this is not well understood. Many scientists now think sexual orientation is shaped for most people by an early age, through complex interactions of biological, psychological, and social factors. Homosexuality is not caused by a bad family or Faulty parenting, or by being a 'sissy', nor can it be 'caught' It is simply one of the many normal variations there are amongst human beings.

### **Is Homosexuality a choice?**

Nobody chooses to be heterosexual, they just are. It is the same for lesbian and gay people, a natural part of who they are. Many realise their sexual orientation in early adolescence before they have had any sexual experience. Others may not realise or accept their same sex attraction until later in their lives, sometimes after they have married and had children. Most go through a time of grief and fear and denial. Because all of us have been brought up in a homophobic society, it takes time for a gay person to accept their different sexuality. Considerable courage is needed to 'come out' to family and friends, or to live as an openly gay person

### **Can gay people be happy?**

Most same sex attracted people can, and do live creative and joyful lives that enrich society. Acceptance and support from the people around them frees them to do this.

### **Can someone's sexual orientation be changed?**

Even though homosexual orientation is not a mental illness, some people may try to change their sexual orientation, or others such as churches, or parents, may seek therapy for a young person. Although some therapists claim to have been successful in changing their clients, many of the claims come from organisations that have an ideological perspective on sexual orientation, rather than from mental health professionals. The long term results are not well known

The American Psychological Association stated in 1990, that conversion therapy could do more harm than good. Changing sexual orientation would involve more than changing only sexual behaviour. It would require that a person's a person's emotional romantic and sexual feelings, and their social identity were altered. Although some mental health providers do attempt sexual orientation conversion, others question the ethics of trying to alter through therapy, what is not a disorder

### **Does being attracted to a person of your own sex make you a homosexual person?**

No. Some people, both young and adult may have some same sex attractions or experience, at times in their lives, though they do not consider themselves lesbian or gay. These feelings are normal for some, but because of the fears of same sex attraction we are brought up with, most people find them upsetting.

### **Why do some gay men and lesbians, tell people about their sexual orientation?**

It is difficult for a person to become a full and happy human being if their sexuality is denied, especially by those who love them. Telling family and friends means taking the risk of being rejected, yet hoping still hoping to be loved as before. It is a difficult time, but can also be a relief, after years of pretending to be heterosexual. With support, families often find they are enriched as they learn to understand and be proud of their family member who is gay.

### **Do gay people have more sexual partners?**

They share about the same amount of interest in sexual activity as heterosexual people. As with heterosexual people, gay and lesbian and bisexual people experience a rich diversity of ways they live and love as men and women.

### **Do gay men abuse children?**

Paedophilia should not be confused with homosexuality. Both heterosexual and homosexual people can be sexually attracted to children, but most abuse occurs in the home, by people who regard themselves as heterosexual.

### **Can lesbians and gay men be easily identified?**

While you may be able to identify some gay people, most lesbians and gay and bisexual people are indistinguishable from other people. They work in all kinds of jobs, and in every country. They are singles, committed couples, rich, poor, country and city dwellers, and sports

people. They may have a trade or be academics, artists or teachers.

### **But why must they have the HERO parade?**

Hero Parade was developed as a demonstration of gay identity after many years of injustice suffered by the gay community. Because lesbians and gays are defined by their sexuality it may appear to be the focus of the parade. It certainly gains the most attention from the media. Less obvious are the floats celebrating the normal range of human endeavour, such as gay and lesbian business associations, Christian groups, sports teams, and support groups. Although many do find some of the costumes and dances upsetting it must be remembered that some heterosexual people also, like to express their sexuality in similar flamboyant ways.

### **TO CONTACT PFLAG South**

**Meetings** Community House  
Moray Place  
4<sup>th</sup> Monday each month  
7.30 pm  
**Cell Phone** 025 6869-304  
**Email** [gouldint@es.co.nz](mailto:gouldint@es.co.nz)  
**Mail** PO Box 5266 Dunedin  
**Website**  
<http://au.geocities.com/pflagsouth>  
**Office** 326 Moray Place Dunedin  
(Methodist Mission office)  
(03) 477 2000  
**Hours** 10-2 pm  
Monday, Wednesday, Friday

# **F A Q S**

## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

### **ABOUT HOMOSEXUALITY**



**PFLAG South**  
Parents Families and Friends  
of Lesbians and Gays