NEEDS ASSESMENT FOR

GAY, LESBIAN, BISEXUAL AND TRANSGENDER (GLBT) COMMUNITIES

IN THE MANLY LGA

Sue Ladd Community Services Planner Manly Council

January 2004

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1.0 DEFINITION

Sexual and gender diversity in our community relates to gay men, lesbians, bisexuals and transgender people.

Following a recommendation from Manly's Social Plan Implementation Committee, Manly Council resolved to include gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender communities in the planning process for the 2004 Manly Social Plan. This follows an increasing trend by several NSW councils to be inclusive of this group. Gay men and lesbians are also designated as an optional target group by the Department of Local Government for social planning. For Manly Council, it is increasingly relevant to include the needs of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender, to ensure consistency with the NSW Anti-Discrimination Act (1977) which makes discrimination, harassment or vilification on the grounds of sexuality, transgender and HIV/AIDS status illegal.

As the Census of Population and Housing does not address questions relating to sexual and gender diversity, a demographic profile for this group is not included in this analysis.

2.0 CONSULTATION METHOD

Consultation to assess the needs of this target group included a range of methods, both qualitative and quantitative:

- 1. Focus group
- 2. Surveys of GLBT and support groups
- 3. Service providers
- 4. Literature review

2.1 Focus group

A focus group was held with <u>GL@M</u>, (Gays and Lesbians at Manly), a social support group for young people facilitated by Northern Sydney Health and Manly Council Youth Services. Seven members of <u>GL@M</u> attended, which was an average turn out for their regular meetings. Ages of those attending ranged from 14 years to 22 years, with five females, and two males. Semi-structured questions used for discussion by the group included:

- What are the issues facing you as a gay or lesbian person living on the Northern Beaches?
- What can Council do to improve/fix some of these things?
- Apart from being involved in GL@M, have you used any other Council services before?
 - a. If yes, tell us about your experience in using these services
 - b. If no, what stops you from using Council services
- Imagine the ideal Manly community in 50 years time...what would you it look like?

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2.2 Survey of GLBT and support groups

- An email survey (see Appendix A) was distributed to all <u>GL@M</u> members by the <u>GL@M</u> facilitator, with two responses.
- A survey was sent to PFLAG Northside (Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays Supporting North of the Harbour), for completion at their November 2003 meeting. A maximum of fourteen people attend PFLAG meetings, and five completed surveys were returned for analysis. See Appendix B for the survey.

2.3 Service Providers

- Survey questions were included in the November/ December 2003 'Helix Herald', a newsletter of Helix Northside and Beaches Gay Group Inc (a group for older gay men). Unfortunately no responses were received.
- The Men's Consultant of the HIV & Sexual Health Promotion Unit sent out an email survey to relevant Northern Sydney Health providers. Unfortunately no responses were received.
- The Health Access Consultant of the HIV & Sexual Health Promotion Unit, Northern Sydney Health presented the key issues facing GLBT to the April 2003 meeting of the Manly Social Plan Implementation Committee.

2.4 Literature Review

Several relevant sources of literature were reviewed, in conjunction with analysing consultation results, and these are referred to in the discussion of issues.

3.0 REVIEW OF SERVICES FOR GLBT

3.1 Northern Beaches/Northern Sydney Services

GL@M

'GL@M', or Gays and Lesbians at Manly is an ongoing social support group in the Northern Beaches for lesbian, bisexual, gay, transgender people and other sexual minorities 25 years and younger. The group meets fortnightly on a Tuesday night at Manly Youth Council, Kangaroo Street, Manly. A Manly Council Youth Services Counsellor attends this meeting, who is also available for support by appointment between meetings. GL@M's facilitator is a representative of Northern Sydney Health's HIV & Sexual Health Promotion Unit. The group provides a mix of social outings and events, video nights, discussions and guest speakers. GL@M's objectives are:

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- To provide an environment which is non-judgmental, physically and emotionally safe; and
- To create access to a safe space where participants may discuss issues that are important to them as gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender young people.

PFLAG

PFLAG Northside, or Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays Supporting North of the Harbour, holds monthly support meetings at the Youth Development Centre in Mosman. They provide a safe, friendly place where participants can talk openly, they maintain a library of books, videos and articles to help educate parents and others on issues of homosexuality, publish a monthly newsletter, and provide an information telephone line. PFLAG is supported by Mosman Council and Northern Sydney Health.

Helix Northside and Beaches Gay Group Inc

Helix is a social club, based on Sydney's North Shore, for Gay people looking for companionship with other gay people through social events, outdoor activities, theatre and more. www.surf.to/helixnorth

HIV & Sexual Health Promotion Unit, Northern Sydney Health

This unit comprises a team which includes a Unit Manager, two Youth Consultants (one focusing on the <u>GAL@H</u> group – gay and lesbians at Hornsby), a Health Access Consultant, a CALD HIV & Sexual Health Improvement Consultant, and Men's Consultant.

Manly Sexual Health

Provides advice, support and counselling for all sexual health related issues.

Women's Resource Centre

Women affected by domestic violence in same-sex relationships can access the Women's Resource Centre at Dee Why for legal advice, counselling and emergency accommodation options at the Women's Refuge.

Youth & Adolescent Counsellors, Manly Youth Services

A Youth and Adolescent Counsellor from Manly Council Youth Services attends each fortnightly <u>GL@M</u> meeting. <u>GL@M</u> attendees are encouraged to access the Counsellor for a one-on-one counselling session, if necessary.

Gay and Lesbian Liaison Officer, NSW Police

The Northern Beaches has a GLLO based at Dee Why.

3.2 Regional/NSW-wide Services

Gay & Lesbian Counselling Service

Volunteer phone counselling and referral service provided seven nights a week from 4pm to midnight.

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Lifeline

Telephone counselling service

Lesbian and Gay Anti-Violence Project

Takes reports of violence from victims and witnesses, refers to other services, provides advocacy where appropriate and develops community safety initiatives.

Lesbian and Gay Legal Advice Service

Free legal advice to lesbians and gay men, located in the Inner City Legal Centre

Twenty10 Gay and Lesbian Youth Support Services

An organisation for young gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people who are having problems at home or have become homeless.

FPA Health

Promotes the reproductive and sexual health of the people of NSW, involved in several educational initiatives focused on anti-homophobia in schools.

Anti-Discrimination Board

For information or to make a complaint regarding discrimination or vilification

Attorney General's Department

Has a Gay and Lesbian Policy Officer to provide assistance on referral and support services.

3.3 Gaps

- Social support group for young adults
- Safe places
- Drop-in centre

4.0 CONSULTATION RESULTS

4.1 Future Vision

<u>GL@M</u> focus group attendees were asked to imagine their ideal Manly community in 50 years time, and to discuss what they thought it would look like, their comments included:

- More gay friendly bars and nightclubs
- A drop-in centre for GLBT
- Greater acceptance of GLBT people on the Northern Beaches
- Improved and cheaper transport

4.2 Summary of Issues

The key issues facing GLBT, arising from consultation have been summarised as:

- Discrimination, Abuse and Isolation
- Safety
- Education
- Access to Information
- Sexual Health

4.3 Issues, Needs & Strategies

All respondents (<u>GL@M</u> focus group, survey and PFLAG surveys) were asked to comment on the issues facing GLBT people living on the Northern Beaches. In order of priority, the responses included:

ISSUE:	1.0	DISCRIMINATION, ABUSE AND ISOLATION
Need:	1.1	Reduce sense of isolation

GL@M focus group attendees rated discrimination as one of their top issues they face as a GLBT person. Discrimination often took the form of verbal or physical abuse, hassling or staring by strangers on the street. Hostility from passers-by was common, especially if they happened to be holding hands with their partner. General homophobia in their everyday lives was a norm for many of these young people. GL@M focus group attendees also discussed the fear of being 'outed', or that people will know they are gay and possibly humiliate them or gossip with others about them being gay. Most wanted to have the choice as to who they came out to. A recent report by the Attorney General's Department of NSW revealed that young people were concerned with the 'trade-off between being true to yourself and being open about your sexuality, and on the other hand avoiding hostility and abuse. In the words of one participant, "you shouldn't have to hide to be safe, but you have to be pragmatic". ¹

The Northern Beaches was not considered a particularly gay-friendly environment to live in, unlike many of the inner-city suburbs. One <u>GL@M</u> survey respondent believed that the Northern Beaches "does not even have a small trace of a GLBT community".

One <u>GL@M</u> survey respondent stated a major issue was being abused, both physically and verbally by uneducated people. This had led to a feeling of isolation and social displacement from the broader community. Another <u>GL@M</u> survey respondent listed isolation, or access to the gay community on the Northern Beaches as being the number one issue facing them. Young gay men and lesbians (ages 16-19 years) who took part in a recent survey by the Attorney General's Department reported relatively high levels of various forms of abuse, and also a high incidence of negative impacts, such as depression, anxiety or withdrawal. ²

<u>GL@M</u> focus group attendees suggested the need to increase communication between <u>GL@M</u> and the Manly Youth Council. As one PFLAG survey respondent said "there is a need for youth groups that are open to people as people that do not stereotype male and female roles". GLBT youth should feel comfortable accessing Youth Council meetings and activities, if they so wish.

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¹ Attorney General's Department of NSW (December 2003), 'A Report on Homophobic Hostilities and Violence Against Gay Men and Lesbians in New South Wales', ISBN: 0734728166.

² Attorney General's Department of NSW (December 2003), 'A Report on Homophobic Hostilities and Violence Against Gay Men and Lesbians in New South Wales', ISBN: 0734728166.
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Suggested strategy:

- Improve communication between <u>GL@M</u> and Manly Youth Council to reduce social isolation of GLBT and reduce homophobia in young people
- Ensure Council's Access and Equity Policies and strategies respond to discrimination and harassment on the basis of sexuality

ISSUE:	1.0	DISCRIMINATION, ABUSE AND ISOLATION
Need:	1.2	Establish a support group for young GLBT adults

Both PFLAG & <u>GL@M</u> survey respondents identified the need for a social support group similar to <u>GL@M</u>, but one which provided ongoing support for young adults, whilst providing the opportunity to socialise with other GLBT people their age.

Suggested strategy:

• Investigate funding opportunities to establish a social support group for young adults not presently met by GL@M

ISSUE:	2.0	SAFETY
Need:	2.1	Improve perception of safety

Safety was raised by all respondents as an issue facing GLBT people. GL@M members discussed safety in the context of late night activities, such as being in places such as The Corso or Warringah Mall, or on public transport. They did point out that their perception of safety were more about being a young person out late at night, not necessarily being a young GLBT person out late at night.

Violence against gay men and lesbian continues within the community in many forms, including physical assaults, verbal harassment and intimidation. The 'Out of the Blue' survey conducted in 1994³ reported that lesbians were six times more likely than other Sydney women to have experienced a physical assault in a 12-month period. Gay men were four times more likely than other Sydney men to have experienced a physical assault in a 12-month period.

In a report released in December 2003, following consultation with 670 survey and focus group participants, more than half (56%) of survey respondents reported having experienced one or more forms of homophobic abuse, harassment or violence in the past 12 months. The three types of abuse most commonly experienced, both in the past year and ever, were verbal abuse; harassment such as spitting, offensive gestures, being followed and threatened or attempted physical attack/assault. Other respondents reported experiencing property damage/vandalism/theft; written threats or abuse/hate mail; physical attack with

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³ Sandroussi, J and Thompson, S., 1995, Out of the Blue: A police survey of violence and harassment against gay men and lesbians, NSW Police Service, Price Waterhouse Urwick.
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or without a weapon; and sexual assault. 4

Suggested strategy:

Ensure Council's Crime Prevention Plan addresses the issue of homophobic violence

ISSUE:	2.0	SAFETY
Need:	2.2	Facilitate safe meeting places for GLBT

The need for more gay friendly venues for GLBT to go to socialise and feel safe was raised by several GL@M focus group and survey respondents, and PFLAG survey respondents. As one PFLAG respondent said, there was a need for "...emotional support from other gays and lesbians in a supportive environment". Providing safe venues would obviously go someway towards addressing the issues of isolation and social displacement evidently felt by GLBT youth.

There were two aspects to this suggestion:

- Encouraging more local cafes to be gay friendly venues. (An example of a successful project has been the 'Safe Places initiative' by the Lesbian and Gay Anti-Violence Project (AVP) and South Sydney Council. Pink triangle stickers are placed in cafes where GLBT people can go to if fearful of street based homophobic violence. Even just having one pub or café that is predominantly gay friendly, would be welcome on the Northern Beaches.
- The need for a drop-in centre, or an exclusive space for GLBT at the Manly Youth Centre. This way, GLBT youth can talk to other youth, possibly play pool or video games, and also have access to a counsellor to discuss their issues if needed.

Suggested strategy:

- Investigate 'safe places initiative' and work closely with key stakeholders to establish viability in Manly
- Assess the feasibility of a drop-in centre of GLBT exclusive space at the Manly Youth Centre

ISSUE:	3.0	EDUCATION
Need:	<i>3.1</i>	Reduce homophobia in schools

Most of the PFLAG survey respondents were concerned that the broader community failed to accept that homosexuality was normal. As one respondent put it, some... "parents or adults have no idea that homosexuality is not a choice".

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⁴ Attorney General's Department of NSW (December 2003), 'A Report on Homophobic Hostilities and Violence Against Gay Men and Lesbians in New South Wales', ISBN: 0734728166.

Overwhelmingly, PFLAG respondents stated a need for greater acceptance of sexual diversity by the community.

Most of the PFLAG survey respondents felt that homophobia in schools was quite evident, exacerbated by the lack of education about sexual diversity. They stated that attitudes in schools often discouraged young people from 'coming out'. A <u>GL@M</u> survey respondent echoed this claim, believing that "education in schools is totally inadequate, especially in private schools that somehow are exempt from upholding and pushing anti-discrimination".

Every government school should have an anti-discrimination contact officer, as well as a School Discipline Policy or Code which should state that the school does not allow discrimination, harassment, bullying, intimidation or violence, including homophobia. However, a report from the Skool's Out Forum held in February 2002⁵ highlighted the legislative deficiencies in the NSW Anti-Discrimination Act that exempts religious and non-government schools from provisions of the act, thus allowing discrimination on the basis of homosexuality. The NSW Anti-Discrimination Board's long term aim was to facilitate the introduction of legislation to protect homosexuals from all types of discrimination.

Both PFLAG and <u>GL@M</u> survey respondents believed that the key to reducing homophobia was compulsory education about homosexuality from Year 6 in all schools (including private schools), and a greater need to raise the issues facing GLBT in the broader media. The <u>GL@M</u> focus group attendees believed that by raising awareness of sexual diversity, an attempt could be made to break down existing barriers. They felt that education in schools should be conducted by young people, to make sure that school aged youth could relate to those conveying the message.

Experiences of homophobia at school was evident in a recent report by the Attorney General's Department, which revealed there was a strong feeling that schools needed to be more active and effective in addressing the issues of homophobia and homophobic abuse. This applied to primary as well as secondary schools. ⁶

There are a range of existing resources which schools can access to raise awareness of sexual diversity and to combat discrimination against GLBT students. FPA Health currently run a programme called "Same Difference", which provides training to young people in school presentations on homosexuality and sexual orientation. FPA Health also run 'Out with Homophobia', a one day workshop for high school teachers and others who work with young people. PFLAG respondents identified these initiatives as being desperately needed by Northern Beaches schools.

⁵ NSW Anti-Discrimination Board and the Crime Prevention Division, NSW Attorney General's Department., 2002, Skool's Out Forum on Homophobic Bullying and Harassment in and around Schools ⁶ Attorney General's Department of NSW (December 2003), 'A Report on Homophobic Hostilities and Violence Against Gay Men and Lesbians in New South Wales', ISBN: 0734728166.

Suggested strategy:

• Lobby the Department of Education and Training and private schools to incorporate a sexual diversity component in the Northern Beaches school curriculum

ISSUE:	4.0	ACCESS TO INFORMATION	
Need:	4.1	Raise awareness of support services	

Raising awareness of existing networks and groups such as PFLAG and <u>GL@M</u> was seen as essential. Several survey respondents were concerned about the lack of awareness among the GLBT and the broader community of existing support services.

As one PFLAG member said of their group, "parents of gay and lesbian children can go and learn what being gay means to them, and it gives them a means to cope and learn about the subject".

Both <u>GL@M</u> and PFLAG survey respondents were concerned that PFLAG was a group coordinated and run by volunteers, and that Council needed to provide more support, both financially, and to raise awareness of their group. As one PFLAG survey respondents said, there was a need for "...more funding and also help with advertising and education (or facilitators) as this cannot be done just by volunteers once a month".

<u>GL@M</u> focus group attendees believed that gay and lesbian newspapers should be available in libraries, music shops and cafes.

<u>GL@M</u> focus group attendees also believed that some Manly Council customer service staff were unaware of <u>GL@M</u>, and there was a need to educate them as to all Youth Services activities and events (including <u>GL@M</u>).

Suggested strategy:

- Investigate ways to raise awareness of PFLAG and <u>GL@M</u> within both the GLBT and broader community
- Incorporate sexual and gender diversity into anti-discrimination legislation and access and equity staff training, whilst at the same time raising awareness of <u>GL@M</u> & PFLAG

ISSUE:	5.0	SEXUAL HEALTH
Need:	5.1	Raise awareness of sexual health issues

Whilst health was not identified as an issue by the <u>GL@M</u> or PFLAG, however the Health Access Consultant of the HIV & Sexual Health Promotion Unit of Northern Sydney Health raised this as a point of concern.

A 2002 research paper on the health issues of GLBT Victorians discusses evidence that young GLBT people's experience of homophobia can lead to higher rates of drug and alcohol use, compared to exclusively heterosexual youth. Increased drug and alcohol use are linked to increased sexual risk-taking, suggesting that discrimination may impact directly on the sexual health and patterns and rates of sexually transmitted diseases among young GLBT people. ⁷

Australian research also suggests that those most at risk of HIV/AIDS are more likely to change their sexual behaviours when they can be open about their sexual orientation or gender identity and when the threat or likelihood of discrimination and abuse is minimal. Research also demonstrates that GLBTI people underutilise health services due, in part to their experiences of homophobia. Also, men who identify publicly as heterosexual, but who continue to have sex with men, are unlikely to access sexual health information and services that are targeted at openly gay men. ⁸

Suggested strategy:

• Promote safe sex messages throughout Council toilets and facilities

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⁷ Ministerial Advisory Committee on Gay and Lesbian Health (July 2002), 'What's the Difference? Health Issues of Major Concern to Gay, Lesbian, Transgender and Intersex (GLBTI) Victorians', Published by Rural and Regional Health and Aged Care Services Division, Victorian Government Department of Human Services.

5.0 SUMMARY OF NEEDS ASSESSMENT FOR GLBT				
Issue	Need	Strategy	Responsibility	
1.0 Discrimination, Abuse and Isolation	1.1 Reduce sense of isolation	Improve communication between <u>GL@M</u> and Manly Youth Council to reduce social isolation of GLBT and reduce homophobia in young people	Council: Youth Services Coordinator/ HIV & Sexual Health Promotion Unit, Northern Sydney Health	
		Ensure Council's Access and Equity Policies and strategies respond to discrimination and harassment on the basis of sexuality	Council: Human Resources	
	1.2 Establish a support group for young GLBT adults	Investigate funding opportunities to establish a social support group for young adults not presently met by GL@M	Council: Community Services Planner	
2.0 Safety	2.1 Improve perception of safety	Ensure Council's Crime Prevention Plan addresses the issue of homophobic violence	Council: Crime Prevention Coordinator	

	5.0 SUMMARY OF NEEDS ASSESSMENT FOR GLBT				
Issue	Need	Strategy	Responsibility		
	2.2 Facilitate safe meeting places for GLBT	Investigate 'safe places initiative' and work closely with key stakeholders to establish viability in Manly	Council: Crime Prevention Coordinator/ Manly Chamber of Commerce/ NSW Police GLLO/ Attorney General's Regional Violence Prevention Specialist		
3.0 Education	3.1 Reduce homophobia in schools	 Assess the feasibility of a drop-in centre of GLBT exclusive space at the Manly Youth Centre Lobby the Department of Education and Training and private schools to incorporate a sexual diversity component in the Northern Beaches school curriculum 	Youth Services Coordinator Council: Community Services Planner		
4.0 Access to information	4.1 Raise awareness of support services	 Investigate ways to raise awareness of PFLAG and GL@M within both the GLBT and broader community Incorporate sexual and gender diversity into anti-discrimination legislation and access and equity staff training, whilst at the same time raising awareness of GL@M & PFLAG 	Council: Community Services Planner/ Human Resources		
5.0 Sexual Health	5.1 Raise awareness of sexual health issues	Promote safe sex messages throughout Council toilets and facilities	Council: Community Services Planner		

APPENDIX 'A' - EMAIL SURVEY TO GL@M MEMBERS

If you are a Manly, or Northern Beaches resident, could you please complete this email survey (only 4 questions!) and return to David Moriarty by pressing reply. If you want to talk about this survey, or the Social Plan, please call Sue Ladd, Community Services Planner on 9976 1566. Thanks for your time!

- 1. What are the 3 issues facing you as a GLBT person? (please list in order of priority)
- 2. What can be done to address these issues?
- 3. Do you think the Northern Beaches is lacking in any particular services for GLBT? (if yes, please tell us what)
- 4. Have you used any Manly Council services before?
 - a. If yes, tell us about your experience in using these services
 - b. If no, has anything stopped you from using Council services?

APPENDIX 'B' - SURVEY OF PFLAG MEMBERS



2004 MANLY SOCIAL PLAN Needs Assessment for Gays & Lesbians

Manly Council is currently consulting a range of groups in the community for the 2004 Social Plan. For the first time, Council has included the gay and lesbian community as a key target group. As a member of PFLAG, we would appreciate your input to this process. The information gathered will help to develop strategies that Council is capable of implementing or facilitating.

1)	What do you see as the top 3 issues facing gays and lesbians in Manly and the Northern Beaches?
Issue	1
Issue	2
Issue	3
2)	Can you identify any strategies to address the issues you have raised?
Issue	1
Issue	2
Issue	3
3)	Do you believe the existing services on the Northern Beaches meet the needs of gay and lesbians?
	☐ Yes ☐ No
	If NO, what improvements/ additions could be made to the provision of these services?
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4) Is there anything that could be done to allow greater access to services for gays and lesbians on the Northern Beaches?

5) Any other comments?

Thanks for your time!

Please complete this form at your November PFLAG meeting, and hand back to Jill French, who will in turn return to Manly Council.

If you have any questions about the Social Plan, please contact:

Sue Ladd Community Services Planner Manly Council PO Box 82 Manly, NSW 1655

Tel: 9976 1566

Email: sue.ladd@manly.nsw.gov.au