



WayOut

Central Victorian Youth & Sexual Diversity Project

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Overview of WayOut Project

- Public Activism – why & how
- Fostering diverse participation –
gay/straight alliances
- Engaging our audience - merchandise



Public Activism – why?

Academic Research

- Approximately 11% of young people have sexual attractions towards people of the same sex.
- Same sex attracted young people experience higher rates of alcoholism, illicit drug use, homelessness, family conflict and difficulties at school.¹
- Suicide rates are 4-6 times higher²
- Most suicide attempts occur BEFORE a young person 'comes out'³
- Risk taking etc occurs not because of their sexuality but rather the isolation and discrimination occurring in their environment



Public Activism – how?

- Traditional model is to run confidential 'support' groups (talk about sexuality, have recreational activities etc)
- Our group wanted to "do something public"
- We gave talks to schools, had media articles paper, appeared on TV, recorded a video, attended events
- Benefits:
 - YP develop confidence about their beliefs in equality & their capacity to raise awareness
 - Peer educators = greater engagement of young people
 - Modelling youth participation to other workers
 - Engagement of adult gay & lesbian community



Fostering Diverse Participation

Gay/straight Alliance Model

- Traditional approach is groups for SSA young people only
- Our YP wanted a group open to all
- Benefits have included:
 - Does not require that a person makes a decision about their sexuality and/or 'come out'
 - It is safer – group comes together to fight homophobia
 - Greater 'critical mass' of young people
 - Model promotes connectedness rather than isolation
 - Makes challenging homophobia an important cause for ALL



Engaging our audience

Development & marketing of Merchandise

- Young people identified that the best way to reach others was through merchandise
- We have produced t-shirts, stickers, posters, pens, lollies, badges, information cards and a video
- Benefits:
 - Group is 'purposeful', innovative and fun
 - "People love free stuff" and we have engaged with thousands of people through the merchandise.
 - members coincidentally discuss issues and provide mutual support