

Hi, my name is Lou Peters and I'm 22 years old. I have lived all of my life in a small country town in Central Victoria with a population of about 1,000 people. It's your typical country town – full of families who are still on the same farm that their great-great grandfather started when the town was first settled ages ago. Everyone goes to church on Sunday morning. All the boys play football and all the girls watch the boys play football. Everyone knows everyone and everyone knows everything that happens in town. My town has extremely little diversity. The Italian guy at the pizza place is about as diverse as it gets.

There were never any conversations on anything like sexual diversity. The first time I heard the word 'lesbian' was when I was about 8 years old and a lesbian couple had moved into town and began to run the local video store. They didn't last long because as soon as people in the town became aware they were lesbians, they didn't go there anymore. That was followed by some young guys throwing bricks through the shop windows. They then came back again and ran-sacked the store and their home behind it and left a clear 'not welcome' message by killing the women's pet dog. So the message that I got from a very young age from my community was that "GAY IS NOT OK."

Several years later, the issue came up again. I was about 14 years old and we were having a family function. My grandmother noticed my freshly shaven hair-do – this had been an act of teenage rebellion in an attempt to get expelled from my strict catholic high school. She took me aside and said "its Okay, I'll love you no matter what." I had no idea what so was on about and just looked at her with a blank expression. She then went on to say that her sister is a lesbian and if I need too, I could talk to her. I just said 'um – okay?' and thought to myself, why would she say that – I'm not gay – that's wrong.

A few years later when I was 16, things had changed. I had grown up and after years of knowing that I didn't like guys, I discovered that the reason for this was that I like girls. I felt okay about this but I didn't have anyone that I felt I could talk to about it. I also had no idea if there were any other young people who felt the same as I did. Then a few months later, Di came along and spoke to me about the idea of starting this same sex attracted young people's group. After the group began, I met my first girlfriend and made friends with other same sex attracted young people and came out to my family and friends.