

# This is The Pinnacle Foundation newsletter. We have updates.

December 2012

## ...and lots of them!

So many milestones in this, our second year, and so much exciting news in this issue.

- 15 scholarship winners announced for 2012 with grants of nearly \$40,000 going to some of the most inspiring young LGBTIQ people we've ever met;
  - Prof Kerryn Phelps AM joins The Hon Michael Kirby AC CMG as one of our esteemed Patrons;
  - Pinnacle launches in Adelaide at Government House, hosted by Minister, now Premier, Jay Weatherill;
  - Pinnacle Scholar Isobel Connell speaks out on SBS's Insight program about bullying and homophobia in schools;
- Our Cornerstone Membership for benefactors who make a substantial donation launched;
- Innovative fundraising in Sydney;
  - Pinnacle's recent press coverage; and
  - Invitation to join Michael Kirby and Kerryn Phelps on February 24 in Sydney to introduce our 2012 scholarship winners.

If you have any feedback, we'd love to hear from you. Sean Linkson, Executive Director

## Meet our newest Patron



We are honoured and delighted to announce Prof Kerryn Phelps AM has joined The Hon Michael Kirby AC CMG as one of our esteemed Patrons. Known to many as "Dr Kerryn", she's been a familiar face since the 1980s, appearing regularly on TV, radio and in print media informing the public on a wide range of health issues.

She is focused on bringing the message of integrative medicine, public health and human rights issues to the public. Kerryn was the first woman and first LGBTIQ person to be elected Federal President of the Australian Medical Association (AMA). In 2003 she was awarded the Centenary Medal for services to health and medicine and in the 2011 Honours List was named a Member of the Order of Australia. In 2009, she was named one of the 25 most influential lesbians in Australia by readers of queer website [samesame.com.au](http://samesame.com.au)

Kerryn and her wife Jackie Stricker-Phelps have been strident voices in the LGBTIQ community and both are outspoken advocates for Marriage Equality. They married in a religious ceremony in New York in 1998, and returned to New York in

Photo courtesy  
Steven Laxton, New York

September 2011 to complete the process with a legal marriage. Under current Australian law, their marriage continues to be unrecognised.

*"Jackie and I are honoured to be associated with The Pinnacle Foundation and fully support its important mission. Struggles and barriers are still faced by many young LGBTIQ people coming to terms with their sexual identity, particularly in rural and remote areas. Marginalisation and discrimination can crush young souls and destroy lives.*

*Pinnacle's financial support for education through scholarships, matched with a mentoring program, ensures young LGBTIQ people who need help will get it. Passing wisdom from one generation to another can change lives. There is nothing more satisfying than seeing young people rise above their difficulties and achieve their full potential. Pinnacle is creating the new leaders of our community and they do it in a profound and practical way. That's why they have our full support. Jackie and I hope they get your support as well."*

## Join the 2012 Scholarship party!

If you're in Sydney on Friday 24th February put 6.00 - 7:30pm aside. Our Patrons the Hon Michael Kirby AC CMG and Prof Kerryn Phelps AM will join us to announce the 15 recipients

for the 2012 Pinnacle Scholarships. Invitations with venue details are coming soon.

Brisbane, Melbourne, Adelaide and Perth will follow later in the year!

## 2012 Scholarships Awarded

Our Selection panel of Susan Brooks (Chair), Warren Stanborough, Dave Rorke and Philip Comans has been busy since October assessing 32 applications for Scholarship awards in 2012. In a mammoth three-day task, they short-listed 18 extraordinary young LGBTIQ people. Assisted by via video conference facilities provided by Talent2, they interviewed applicants in Perth, Adelaide, Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane, and one phoning in from France, against our strict criteria. It was a tough decision to choose 15 worthy recipients for Pinnacle Scholarships worth nearly \$40,000. We'll announce their names and chosen field of study next year, so stayed tuned.

Some interesting statistics about this year's process:

- We received triple the number of applications;
- We have had a 50% increase in the number of scholars;
- 44% of applicants were gay, 37% were lesbian and 19% were transgender.

We are now organising mentors who reside in the same city or state, share sexual identity and professional/academic interests for our scholars. To those who have registered with Pinnacle as mentors, you'll be hearing from us if there's match.

### But we still need your help...

Many of our younger generation still suffer prejudice and intolerance. Your financial support can make a huge difference by ensuring the potential of these brave students is nurtured and realised. All our scholarship funds are donated from the community and all deductions over \$2 are tax deductible. Our website makes it easy to give, please do:

<http://www.thepinnaclefoundation.org/index.php/make-a-donation>



Our first South Australian Pinnacle Scholar, medical student Neville Fields (L), with mentor Dr Tom Turnbull.



The Hon Premier Jay Weatherill MP opens proceedings with Isobel Connell, 2011 Scholarship recipient.

## Pinnacle launches in Adelaide

Following on from our very successful launch in Melbourne, generously hosted by Goldman Sachs, we recently launched in Adelaide thanks to the help and support from the current Premier, the Honourable Jay Weatherill MP, a staunch supporter of marriage equality.

About 50 local LGBTIQ community members met in Parliament House's beautiful Balcony Room to celebrate Pinnacle's achievements and be introduced to our first SA Pinnacle Scholar, medical student Neville Fields. He and law student Isobel Connell from Sydney represented this year's nine winners and gave rousing and funny speeches, proving The Pinnacle Foundation really does create our future leaders.

In his scholarship application student Neville expressed his excitement about "the possibility of the mentoring aspect to this scholarship ...as it will give me precious insight into what my life may be like as an out and proud doctor."

We awarded Neville a \$9000 scholarship to partly pay for tuition fees, medical equipment, textbooks and a computer. We matched Neville with our registered mentor, Dr Tom Turnbull, a GP in Adelaide, who spoke about how rewarding his mentor relationship was with Neville.



**This is the logo for  
The Pinnacle Foundation.**



## Introducing the Cornerstone Membership

For benefactors who want to make a substantial financial commitment of \$50,000 or more in cash, securities, life insurance benefits or outright bequests, Pinnacle offers a Cornerstone Membership. The first membership was granted to Warren Stanborough and John Douglass.

*"We are honoured to be the first two donors to become Cornerstone Members. We felt it was time to commit to making a real difference to disadvantaged gay people. The Pinnacle Foundation had the right mix of expertise and accountability for us to feel comfortable with making a substantial financial commitment now."*

- Warren Stanborough and John Douglass

We understand there are potential donors out there who want to know how best to support us while also ensuring they take full advantage of available tax benefits. We now have this Donor Support Information on our website. For more detail on Cornerstone membership contact us.

Cornerstone members have the option of having a scholarship named after themselves, another individual, organisation or company. Named scholarships are a means of ensuring a living testament to an individual's, organisation's or company's commitment to diversity through education. They have a significant impact on the life of a deserving student. While a Cornerstone member may direct that a scholarship be assigned to a specific area of study or tertiary institution, Pinnacle would prefer it not be narrowly defined since this might not always meet our scholars' needs.

Other benefits for Cornerstone members are free invitations to our regular social functions attended by our Patron/s and scholars; the option of having their name added to our Cornerstone Honour List, as well as receiving regular reports on the progress of our scholars and the Foundation itself.

## A queer insight on SBS: **Bullying is uncool**

Overcoming discrimination, subsequent emotional challenges and finding the capacity to pursue your academic dreams is something most of our scholars have experienced firsthand. One of our 2011 scholars, Isobel Connell, recently spoke on SBS Insight program about coming out, being bullied and overcoming adversity with the Insight mediator Jenny Brockie.

Transcript:

JENNY BROCKIE: What happened at primary school?

ISOBEL CONNELL: I was verbally and physically bullied at primary school because I told a girl I had a crush on her and the teachers decided not to tell my parents (exactly what happened). They decided to just tell my parents that I had a problem, and that I needed to see a doctor.

J: How did that bullying you experienced at primary school impact on you?

I: It shoved me further back into the closet and made me hate myself.

J To what extent did it make you hate yourself?

I: To the extent where I was suicidal and self-harming.

J: And Amanda (Mum), tell me a little bit more about that from your perspective, did you know what was going on at this stage?

A: We knew that Isobel was having some emotional problems, it wasn't until she left her bag on the school bus one day and I had to go to the depot and pick it up and identify the contents of the bag and in it was a diary and when I got home I read the diary and she was talking about how terrible she was feeling and how she wanted to die and how she'd been cutting herself and then it sort of went exponential from there

J: I've gotten through it now, I'm working two jobs

and studying law at university, but I don't think that I could have done it without the professional help and a lot of people can't afford that kind of help.

Or see the program online: <http://www.sbs.com.au/insight/episode/index/id/381/Gay-in-School>

Since starting her law degree The Pinnacle Foundation has supported Isobel with a scholarship and a mentor.

Bullying and discrimination against LGBTIQ youth is very widespread and recent statistics are alarming. Tiffany Jones experienced bullying firsthand at school and has just completed a ground-breaking thesis on the topic, surveying 3000 LGBTIQ Australian students and analysing 80 federal and state policy documents. The results deliver a sobering message.

Tiffany Jones' thesis - Sexual Subjects: GLBTIQ Student Subjectivities in Australian Education Policy - was conducted with supervision from Dr Lynne Hillier and Dr Anne Mitchell, ARCSHS, La Trobe University. It involved an analysis of over 80 federal and state level policy documents, interviews with key policy informants around the nation and data from an online survey data of over 3,000 Australian LGBTIQ students (ranging from 14-21 years). There were 40.36% male students (over 80% identified as exclusively homosexual); 56.35% female students (who were more evenly divided between bisexual and homosexual identities) and a group of 91 young people (2.90%) who identified as genderqueers, transgender, intersex or otherwise gender diverse. In total 65.16% of GLBTIQ students attended government schools, 17.58% attended Catholic schools and 11.86% attended 'other Christian' schools – figures consistent with broader demographics.

Asked whether their school had policies that protected them against homophobia, 42.95% of the GLBTIQ students 'Don't Know', 31.80% said 'No' and only 25.25% said 'Yes'. Thus, most students were not exposed to the discrimination ban of national education policies and state-specific laws that should be expected in schools. However, more students knew they were protected within the Victorian and NSW government systems where distinct state-level anti-homophobia education policy documents existed – this was a highly significant

correlation that showed the value of state education policies and the way they 'trickle down' to encourage policies at the school level.

The situation in Australian schools can be highly problematic. In 2010 61% of young people reported verbal abuse because of homophobia, 18% physical abuse and 26% 'other' forms of homophobia. Gender diverse students and males were at increased risk of this abuse. The most common place of abuse remained school with 80% of those who were abused naming school. This continues the trend of increased levels of reported homophobic violence in schools (69% in 1998; 74% in 2004) and may, in part, be the result of more students 'coming out' early in life.

School policies against homophobia made a difference. GLBTIQ students who knew their school had protective policies in place were:

- More likely to feel safe than those at schools with no policy protection (75% v. 45%).
- More likely to feel good about their sexuality than those at schools with no policy protection (85% v. 78%).
- More likely to experience friendliness from students and staff than those at schools with no policy protection (57.22% v. 19.57%).
- Less likely to report there were no "structural or social supports" in place like resources and counselling referrals than those at schools with no policy protection (15.71% v. 58.62%).
- Almost half as likely to attempt suicide than those at schools with no policy protection (12.77% v. 22.21%).
- Half as likely to experience physical homophobic abuse than GLBTIQ students at schools with no policy protection (and much more likely to be able to have any reports of such bullying effectively dealt with).

For many of our scholarship applicants it is clear coming out to their family and friends have led to rejection. This makes pursuing academic aspirations more challenging. That's where Pinnacle comes in. We're helping to change lives and we're hoping you'll help us.

Cornerstone Members  
John Douglass (L) & Warren Stanborough (R) with Michael Kirby at a Pinnacle launch function that John and Warren hosted at Ravesi's in Bondi.

This is the logo for  
The Pinnacle Foundation.

## Oh Dahl, What a good way to raise money!

We're delighted that some people have undertaken some innovative ways of fundraising for Pinnacle. This was an email from Teresa, one of our registered Pinnacle mentors in Sydney:

"It's my birthday in a couple of weeks time, and instead of having a party with pressies for me, I thought I might have a very small fundraising lunch for Pinnacle - a dozen friends pay \$25 each for

rice and dhal and good company in my garden! I know it will only be a small contribution, but it will also raise awareness of Pinnacle."

A little later we received a follow-up email to say the event was a great success, Teresa had given a little speech about Pinnacle, and raised \$900. Happy Birthday and many thanks to Teresa.



### SEP 20 AGENTS OF CHANGE

AUTHOR // Brendan Bolger  
CATEGORIES // Feature

Its very name suggests it's at the top of its game – The Pinnacle Foundation finds and mentors future community leaders with its scholarship program for marginalised LGBTQI youth. Brendan Bolger met a 2011 scholar who shared what it's like to be young and queer today.

Harri Harding was attracted to the Pinnacle Foundation as "it was about queer students showing leadership in their fields".

"And I work really hard to make changes and create dialogue," she says, "to change people's conceptions of other queer people."

In her final year of study at Sydney's Conservatorium of Music, undertaking a composition degree in music, like many young LGBT youth, the 23-year-old has faced her fair share of discrimination, spending her secondary years at Pymble Ladies' College on the North Shore.

"As you can imagine that was a very interesting experience, because I come from quite a religious family as well, who didn't really take it very well that I was gay – I don't have a lot of contact with them, but it is getting better," she says.

## We've been popular

We've had lots of press surrounding Pinnacle Scholars and events – check it out

<http://gaynewsnetwork.com.au/feature/feature/1447-agents-of-change.html>



## ..but we still need you

We pride ourselves on operating predominantly with the use of pro-bono services and the use of volunteers. That means the vast majority of donations go to scholarships and retained earnings, not overheads or marketing expenses. We need volunteer help in marketing, event management, administration and fundraising, as well as dedicated people on the ground in every capital city to help create Regional Committees. Please call Sean Linkson on 0414 279 880 if you can help.

visit us at  
[www.thepinnaclefoundation.org](http://www.thepinnaclefoundation.org)