



Trish Doyle MP
Member for Blue Mountains

International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia

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Tonight I speak about the importance of IDAHOT, the International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia.

In Katoomba this Sunday I will attend the rainbow flag-raising ceremony as the member for Blue Mountains because it is a great day and also because vilification and persecution are still a feature of everyday life for members of our lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and questioning [LGBTIQ] community, and it has to stop.

I note some alarming facts and figures, as teachers often do.

Same-sex relationships are still illegal in 78 countries. In 11 of them, the death penalty can be applied. There were a total of 1,731 cases of reported killings of transgender and gender diverse people from 1 January 2008 to 31 December 2014.

Same-sex attracted and gender diverse youth who may or may not be open about their sexuality or gender identity have reported significantly higher mental health and wellbeing concerns than heterosexual youth.

Across Australia, 61 per cent of same-sex attracted young people report having experienced verbal abuse and 18 per cent report having experienced physical abuse on the basis of their sexuality.

When asked where they were when the abuse took place, 80 per cent said it was at school.

My friend Eryk Kesa has spent 58 years struggling to reconcile the difference between his physical gender and his own identity.

Born a woman in Catholic Poland, Eryk was teased and bullied by classmates for being different.

Eryk said that in those days "everyone was straight". Of course, in reality, there would have been many lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people living in secrecy and in fear throughout the community, but "coming out" was not done.

Eryk and his mum fled Europe and settled in Australia where he continued to live as a woman.

Three years ago, Eryk made the decision to transition to a woman and underwent hormone and invasive therapy.

This week Eryk shared his story with our local newspaper, the *Blue Mountains Gazette*, in the hope it will help to educate other transgender people, particularly the young, about the issues faced by our transgender community.

In raising this matter of public importance and in keeping with my mantra of the personal is political, I finish by paying positive tribute not only to Eryk—and all those who need their communities to waive rainbow flags for and with them—but also to my dear friend D C Sanders who has travelled a path that has involved frustration and pain, but also colour and love.

All strength to her.