



## PROFILE

# SHELLEY ARGENT

Shelley Argent is the National Spokesperson for Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) in Australia and is one of the most successful and effective educationalists, advocates and lobbyists for the human rights of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people.

In 1994 Shelley commenced a Social Science (Human Services) Degree majoring in Child and Family at QUT, which she completed in 1997.

When Shelley's eldest son came out as gay it was difficult to find support or information, so she approached the Aids Council seeking help to understand her son and to learn about and be part of his world.

In early 1998 Shelley became an education volunteer with the Queensland AIDS Council (QAC), now known as the Queensland Association for Healthy Communities (QAHC). She completed further studies to gain competencies in HIV/AIDS education and emotional support and also assisted QAC with their publicity campaigns.

Seeking new challenges, Shelley began looking for ways to support families and came across the PFLAG, Brisbane group, which was not particularly active at that time. Shelley re-invigorated the group and became its driving force. She soon realized there were no resources and very little written material to be found, so began to write the first of many educational booklets. Shelley has also written many articles for mainstream and gay papers and magazines on a wide range of topics relating to the difficulties of sexual diversity.

Over the years Shelley has had many requests to give talks to organisations and community groups. She has travelled to rural and regional areas conducting workshops and raising awareness through radio interviews informing the general community about sexual diversity.

Shelley has always had a penchant for human rights, social justice, equality and acceptance in the community and over the years has come to realise the more you do, the more there is to be done.

On behalf of PFLAG, Shelley began lobbying for changes to the Anti-Discrimination Legislation 2002-2003 regarding sexuality. She was invited to speak at the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC) hearing in Brisbane in October 2006 about ending economic discrimination. Commissioner, Graham Innes described Shelley as the "Mother from the Suburbs", a title she wears with great pride.

Shelley was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia in the General Division (OAM) in the 2006 Australia Day Honors for service to the community through raising awareness of issues of acceptance, tolerance and equality for people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex and support for their families.



Since that time she has met with Philip Ruddock, John Howard's policy adviser, Labor Caucus, and several other politicians and their advisers including Queensland politicians, advocating for equality for the LGBT community.

In 2007 Shelley and her family established the Shelley Foundation which provided for a part-time LGBTI Youth Worker in the Logan area to assist youth at risk.

In June 2007 at the 3<sup>rd</sup> National PFLAG Conference in Brisbane, Shelley was elected National Spokesperson for PFLAG. This gave PFLAG a much stronger voice, allowing us to speak out against the discrimination, injustice and homophobia that still exists in society today.

In April 2008 Shelley was invited to participate in the 2020 Summit in Canberra after which, she organised the Brisbane Gay Community Forum. Also following the 2020 Summit, the Women's Sex Discrimination Commissioner, Elizabeth Broderick requested Shelley arrange for a number of lesbian mums to attend a morning tea during her "listening tour" to hear about the issues of discrimination they deal with on a daily basis.

Areas of interest are:

- Equality;
- Age of Consent;
- Adoption of known children to same sex couples;
- Economic Equal Rights;
- Civil Unions and Marriage;
- Parental understanding of loved ones who disclose their diverse sexual orientation;
- Anti- homophobia campaigns; and
- Marriage breakdown due to partner disclosing.

Shelley Argent is a dynamic leader for PFLAG, who works tirelessly to protect and enhance the human rights of the Lesbian Gay Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex Community in Australia and educates mainstream society to become more accepting of their LGBTI members.

Shelley's reason for doing what she does is because she wants a better world for her gay son, where he can enjoy the same respect, rights and privileges as everyone else.