

Researcher Profiles

Dr Lynne Hillier
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“Many same sex attracted young people find ways to rebuild and recreate social networks and reframe themselves as happy, healthy and positive contributors to society”

Dr Lynne Hillier, a Research Fellow at the Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society (ARCSHS) is researching how same sex attracted young people can resist the negative impacts of homophobia.

Homophobic abuse is a particularly damaging type of bullying. It can result in a range of negative health outcomes including depression, drug use, self-harm and suicide. The story however, is not all negative. Many same sex attracted young people find ways to rebuild and recreate social networks and reframe themselves as happy, healthy and positive contributors to society.

It is the aim of Lynne's project to document the many ways that same sex attracted young people resist the negative impacts of homophobia. This will be done in three stages. Firstly, a booklet and a website which focuses on ways young people outsmart (reframe) homophobia will be developed. These will then be used to track 30 same sex attracted young people over a period of two years to map critical moments of change in their lives, including documenting the strategies they use to maximise their health. Finally, the project will instigate a third national study of the sexual health and wellbeing of same sex attracted young people.

For over a decade a great deal of work has been instigated in policy, curriculum and services, as well as community change, to improve the lot of same sex attracted youth. Lynne believes that the third national survey will reveal the impact of this work on these young people's lives.

Lynne works from the Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society (ARCSHS) which was established in 1993 as an independent unit within the Faculty of Health Sciences at La Trobe University. The Centre is dedicated to the advancement of knowledge and applied skills in social health locally, nationally and internationally.

Much of what we hear about same sex attracted young people relates to the negative health outcomes due to homophobia and discrimination. However, many same sex attracted youth do find ways to resist the damaging impacts of homophobia and Lynne's research is documenting these strategies so they can be passed on to enrich other young lives.

VicHealth has been a firm supporter of Lynne's work over several years, and is prepared to sustain research, in areas like same sex attracted youth, that sometimes turn out to be highly controversial.

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