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About Time! GLBT Seniors ALSO Matter STRATEGIC PLAN

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A b o u t T i m e !
G L B T S e n i o r s A L S O M a t t e r

Editor's Introduction

One of the most important community development objectives of The ALSO Foundation is to meet the needs of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender (GLBT) people as they age.

ALSO is in the prime position to facilitate and enable the provision of best-practice services to GLBT people. But how is this best done?

The strategic plan outlined in this document fits in with the broader strategies being implemented by State and Federal governments for dealing with the health and housing needs of older people, and with the approaches outlined by organisations such as VicHealth (e.g. their 'Together We Do Better' campaign) to address the social needs of people as they age.

We can't do it on our own. This document outlines the particular needs that have been identified in the research and forums that ALSO has conducted – and the strategic plan by which we can work progressively towards meeting these needs. Many of the objectives relate to working in collaboration with other organisations, lobbying for government action and policy change, and other strategies to create social changes.

In October 2002, a panel of community development experts and community representatives recommended that ALSO move towards being more readily recognised as an umbrella organisation, providing links between GLBT community organisations, as well as linking individuals with GLBT-friendly services or individual service providers. ALSO already has extensive knowledge of the local community and excellent networking skills. The following strategic plan outlines how ALSO can work with other organisations to facilitate change, providing professional development activities and conducting research to evaluate the effectiveness of strategies that can be implemented to meet the needs of ageing and aged GLBT Victorians.

A number of exciting opportunities are presented in the report's 31 recommendations, such as the development of a model of home-based care for older gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people who are living in their own homes, but who need various forms of outreach services to support them. This report also provides

opportunities for partnering with existing service providers for older people and to look at the training needs that their staff may have in order to provide sensitive and quality care to GLBT clients.

I commend this Strategic Plan to you. It provides a framework within which it is hoped will enable a model of care for GLBT Seniors that is sensitive, respectful and inclusive of the needs of diverse GLBT communities. If you or your organisation are able to assist with meeting the strategic goals outlined within and you wish to discuss the possibilities of working in collaboration, or offering to volunteer your time and expertise on one of our sub-committees or specific projects, please contact our office on (03) 9827 4999 or email: also@also.org.au

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A b o u t T i m e !
G L B T S e n i o r s A L S O M a t t e r

STRATEGIC PLAN

Executive Summary

The ALSO Foundation's Older Persons Project has involved three stages to date: an initial needs assessment, feedback from community consultations, and the development of a strategic plan for meeting the needs of GLBT seniors.

The implications of a growing population of GLBT seniors and changes in expectations about provision of quality services, both within the community and within aged care facilities are significant for seniors' services providers.¹

The initial needs assessment showed that there are three key areas of need: provision of home-based **community services** and **residential aged care services** that are sensitive to the specific needs of GLBT seniors, and the need for specific action to address an increasing problem of loneliness and **social isolation** for some GLBT seniors.

Participants at the community consultations supported these findings.

The research and community consultations also demonstrated that there is considerable potential for The ALSO Foundation ('ALSO') to play a strong role as facilitator and advocate in obtaining improved service provision by mainstream service providers as well as further developing its (ALSO's) own programs in meeting the needs of GLBT seniors.

The purpose of this plan is to suggest actions that will not be restrictive, but rather ones that will enable action to occur. A range of factors impact on ALSO's capacity and ability to implement these actions: this includes the availability of resources and other developments within the community, such as the establishment of the Gay and Lesbian Health Resource Unit by the Victorian Government.

¹ "Seniors' services" includes community based care such as home help, visiting nursing services; aged care assessment; aged care such as Community Aged Care Packages, low-level/high-level residential aged care; community health services; local government seniors recreational programs; and other community programs such as palliative, bereavement and carer support services which include seniors as a significant target group.

An implementation plan that provides details about the “who, how and when” action stages will be prepared as a companion document to this strategic plan. Work towards implementing the proposed actions will lead to both short and long-term benefits, which will contribute to meeting the needs of GLBT seniors today and in the future.

Action Opportunities Summary

The action opportunities identified throughout this Strategic Plan are summarised below.

1. Facilitation

- 1.1.** Initiate a Victorian GLBT seniors’ “interest” committee composed of both GLBT and mainstream organisations to strengthen collaboration between agencies and services.
- 1.2.** Encourage and support members of the ALSO-auspiced Victorian GLBTI Rural Network to develop closer liaison with local government and other agencies’ representatives responsible for seniors’ services within their areas of operation.
- 1.3.** Initiate and participate in a working group to develop an occasional information/discussion series of community forums with topics of interest to GLBT seniors.

2. Advocacy

- 2.1.** Advocate for the inclusion of culturally competent care standards and associated staff training relating to GLBT seniors in:
 - Aged Care Accreditation Standards (Standard 3 - Resident lifestyle).
 - Home and Community Care National Standards.
 - Healthcare and other relevant service standards as identified over time.
- 2.2.** Advocate for GLBT seniors to be included as a special needs group in Aged Care Worker Certificate III/IV courses.
- 2.3.** Encourage seniors' advisory or representative groups associated with local councils and healthcare providers to include an awareness of the specific needs of GLBT seniors in their deliberations.
- 2.4.** Review all ALSO publications to ensure that representation of GLBT senior-affirmative images (including same-sex couples) are included in all general and senior-specific publications, and encompassing all forms of media (e.g., written, radio, electronic and promotional materials).
- 2.5.** Provide GLBT and mainstream media with news articles and human interest stories and information relating to and portraying the lives and experiences of GLBT seniors.
- 2.6.** Work with the Gay and Lesbian Health Resource Unit and Department of Human Services Aged Care Branch to assist local councils in addressing the needs of GLBT seniors in the development and implementation of aged care policy and services.
- 2.7.** Continue to advocate for legislative change to ensure equality under Commonwealth/State & Local Government legislation and policy in relation to same-sex attracted and transgender seniors. Particular examples include ensuring that same-sex partners are entitled to the same survivor benefits as opposite sex partners, full inclusion and protection through anti-discrimination legislation.

- 2.8.** Offer to work with the Gay and Lesbian Health Resource Unit to review and identify best-practice models of GLBT data collection/indicators; and promote the use of these indicators with relevant organisations to ensure sensitive collection of data recording sexuality and gender identity indicators, and those associated with same-sex relationships, as is appropriate to the context.

3. Education and Consultation

- 3.1.** Initiate a pilot project to develop standards for GLBT friendly/responsive seniors' service provision, including:
- Development of a service assessment tool for creating and measuring GLBT friendly/responsive seniors' services.
 - Investigation of options for implementing the service assessment tool.
 - Development of an assessment tool and 'rainbow' charter mark/tick of approval for use by seniors' services assessed as GLBT friendly/responsive.
- 3.2.** Develop, publish and maintain a listing of seniors' services assessed as GLBT friendly/responsive, utilising the service assessment tool (to be available online and in hard copy as part of the annual ALSO Community Directory and as a separate extract publication).
- 3.3.** Offer to work with the Gay and Lesbian Health Resource Unit to facilitate adaptation and extension of existing health care provider awareness and training to workers within the aged care sector.
- 3.4.** Investigate options to contribute to on-site training initiatives for seniors' services staff including agency specific training and general cross agency training.
- 3.5.** Investigate opportunities to develop an ALSO Seniors Speakers Bureau for use in community information and staff training sessions.

4. Care and Support

- 4.1.** Investigate options for a range of housing and care models of service provision for GLBT seniors (e.g. cluster housing, co-operative housing, commercial housing developments, and public housing initiatives).
- 4.2.** Investigate options for the development of a 'demonstration project' providing GLBT sensitive home care for seniors who wish to remain in their homes.
- 4.3.** Seek funding for market research and a feasibility study to be undertaken regarding housing options for GLBT seniors.
- 4.4.** Investigate the possibility of obtaining Approver Provider status under the *Aged Care Act 1997* with a view of providing aged care services to GLBT seniors.
- 4.5.** Host a public information forum/s on housing and care options for GLBT seniors in association with relevant community organisations such as Housing for the Aged Action Group, Matrix Guild (a support group for lesbian seniors), Vintage Men (a support group for gay male seniors), Council on the Ageing (COTA) - Victoria and include government information from the Department of Health and Ageing (Commonwealth), Department of Human Services (State) and the general housing sector.

5. Social Support

5.1. Investigate options to develop a GLBT seniors' friendly visitor/volunteer program.

5.1.1. Liaise with Vintage Men, Matrix Guild, Victorian AIDS Council, People Living with HIV/AIDS (and associated groups, e.g. Positive Women) and Lesbian Cancer Support Group to discuss current initiatives and opportunities for development of expanded friendly visitor/volunteer programs for GLBT seniors.

5.1.2. Initiate discussions with existing friendly visitor/volunteer programs regarding the possibility of enhancing their existing programs or developing a specific program targeting the GLBT community (e.g. Do-Care and friendly visiting programmes provided by ethno-specific service agencies).

5.2. Investigate options to develop social activities for GLBT seniors.

5.2.1. Encourage gay and lesbian community organisations to organise events for gay and lesbian seniors to be held during the annual Victorian Seniors Festival (e.g. Inaugural ANZ Rainbow Tea Dance held by ALSO in association with Matrix Guild and Vintage Men during the Victorian Seniors Festival 2004).

5.2.2. Contribute to projects that action the Ministerial Advisory Committee on Gay and Lesbian Health recommendation that all local governments be encouraged to run support groups for gay men and lesbians who may feel excluded from mainstream support groups and from GLBT social networks and community groups.

5.2.3. Investigate possibilities for monthly GLBT seniors' activities at mainstream seniors' centres in selected local government areas.

5.2.4. Incorporate drop-in and planned programs to improve social connectedness for GLBT seniors in any current or future GLBT Community Centre auspiced by ALSO.

- 5.2.5. Liaise with GLBT community and mainstream (where appropriate) religious and social organisations to encourage a collaborative approach to provision of social activities for GLBT seniors.
- 5.3.** Investigate options to develop intergenerational social and mentoring activities with participation by GLBT seniors.
 - 5.3.1. Seek input from Vintage Men, Matrix Guild, Minus 18 (SSAY group) and local municipality-based same-sex attracted youth groups to the development of intergenerational social and mentoring activities.
- 5.4.** Investigate options to develop GLBT seniors' caregiver support activities.
 - 5.4.1. Liaise with Vintage Men, Matrix Guild, Victorian AIDS Council, People Living with HIV/AIDS (and associated groups, e.g. Positive Women) and Lesbian Cancer Support Group to discuss current initiatives and opportunities for development of expanded caregiver support programs for those people caring for GLBT seniors.
 - 5.4.2. Initiate discussions with existing caregiver support programs and organisations, (e.g. Carers Victoria, Alzheimer's Australia Vic) regarding the possibility of enhancing their existing programs or developing specific programs targeting the GLBT community.

The 32 recommendations listed above cannot be implemented by ALSO alone, but need to be enacted in partnership with government, community and private organisations. These strategic directions represent a model for best-practice in provision of sensitive and appropriate services to meet the needs of the Victorian GLBT seniors' community.

The ALSO Foundation and GLBT Ageing Issues

We're all getting older! And this includes gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender (GLBT) people!

Information about same-sex relationships was collected in the Australian Census in both 1996 and 2001. Almost twice as many people stated they were living in same-sex relationships in 2001 than in 1996 with an increase from 10,214 to 19,596 couples reporting their same-sex domestic partnerships.

Unfortunately, Australians were not asked more broadly in the census about their sexual orientation or gender identity. Those people who identify as GLBT but did not have a partner were not identified; neither were those who are in a same-sex relationship but not sharing a residence with their partner. It is also likely that not all people in same-sex partnership households would have declared this relationship on the census form due to concerns about privacy in relation to census data (in fact, sexual behaviour between men was still illegal in Tasmania until 1997). Therefore the actual numbers of GLBT people is likely to be considerably higher than the census data suggest.

As with the general ageing of the population, the number of GLBT seniors is also increasing. It is therefore timely that The ALSO Foundation (ALSO) considers its role in meeting the needs of this group.

The ALSO Foundation and the ALSO Care & Benevolent Society Inc ('ALSO') assists in the provision of a broad range of supportive, benevolent and charitable services for the purpose of developing, fostering and maintaining an articulate and effective community of GLBT people in Victoria. The ALSO Foundation (ALSO) has undertaken its mission in Melbourne since 1981.

The ALSO mission and vision are:

Mission

The ALSO Foundation is committed to securing legal and social acceptance of GLBT communities in Victoria and to assist members of our community to acquire the skills and capacity to achieve equality and justice on their terms.

Vision

ALSO's vision is to provide leadership and support for Victoria's diverse GLBT communities so that they may grow and develop.

ALSO has already demonstrated its commitment to advancing the interests of GLBT seniors in Victoria through a number of recent initiatives, one of which is the research project undertaken from 2000-2001 investigating the needs of GLBT seniors in Victoria, which subsequently led to the publication of the *GLBT Older Persons' Poster* in 2001 and *The Needs of Older Gay, Lesbian and Transgender People* report - 2002 (Chamberlain C & Robinson P, RMIT University).

This report was followed up with three community consultations targeting Victorian GLBT seniors held during early and mid 2003. This Strategic Plan has been developed using feedback from these forums as well as consideration of a number of overseas GLBT seniors-focused reports and information available from various services, including:

- Public policy analysis and development by the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Foundation (USA)
- Policy and research/curriculum development by the McGill School of Social Work (McGill University, Ottawa, Canada)
- The Greater Boston LGBT Aging Project (USA)
- Seniors Action in a Gay Environment (New York, USA)
- Lavender Seniors of the East Bay (San Leandro, USA)
- New Leaf Outreach to Seniors (San Francisco, USA)
- Spectrum Centre (San Anselmo, USA)
- GLBT Seniors Resource Centre (Toronto, Canada)
- LGBT Generations Project (Vancouver, Canada)
- Sensitivity awareness programs such as Rainbow Train (Seattle, USA)
- The Age Concern, *Opening Doors* initiative (United Kingdom).

ALSO has undertaken other activities that have advanced the concerns of GLBT seniors such as being a key player in advocating for recent changes in State Government legislation. The Victorian *Statute Law Amendment (Relationships) Act 2001* has replaced the term 'de facto spouse' with the broader defined term of 'domestic partner' which now includes both same-sex and heterosexual couples. This has major implications for GLBT seniors in formally recognising both rights and responsibilities of partners in domestic relationships.

In addition to advocating for the rights of GLBT seniors, ALSO provided a representative to the Victorian State Government

Ministerial Advisory Committee on Gay and Lesbian Health (MACGLH) during 2000-2003. The MACGLH advises the State Government on health and wellbeing related issues affecting the Victorian GLBTI communities. In July 2003, the MACGLH released an Action Plan for GLBTI health in Victoria titled *Health and sexual diversity: A health and wellbeing action plan for gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex (GLBTI) Victorians*.

The MACGLH Action Plan notes the following issues of specific interest and concern for seniors:

- obstacles to maintaining friendship, family and social networks for older GLBTI people who come out later in life and those GLBTI people living in rural communities;
- ageism within GLBTI and mainstream communities, including exclusion from GLBTI social networks and invisibility within mainstream social networks;
- issues associated with caring for older partners, relatives and friends;
- invisibility within the (community and residential) aged care sector in relation to service provision and general acknowledgement and positive representation of the needs of older GLBTI people; and
- discrimination in institutionalised aged care and other forms of service provision that older GLBTI people access.

Resulting from the recommendations in the State Government's MACGLH Action Plan, a Gay and Lesbian Health Resource Unit has been established in 2004. This Unit will act as a clearinghouse for gay and lesbian health research and resources and provide information and training in GLBTI health and wellbeing issues for health care providers (including aged care services) in Victoria. The Unit is contained within the La Trobe University, Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society (Melbourne, Australia).

ALSO's Strategic Plan provides background information about issues of interest to seniors together with a summary of ALSO's work to date as part of its Older Persons Project. ALSO's Strategic Plan for meeting the needs of GLBT seniors takes into consideration the expected outcomes of the Resource Unit and aims to work with and compliment their anticipated activities.

Issues Relevant to GLBT Seniors

Issues in common with all seniors

Older people in our society face a number of challenges associated with ageing: the need to manage increased health care needs, in-home care challenges and increases in the cost of living; for example housing costs, utilities, transport and food. All of these issues can be greatly exacerbated by the difficulties of living on limited and fixed incomes and for some, this is made worse by factors such as mobility impairments, social isolation and additional contributing issues such as racism or sexism.

Issues specific to GLBT seniors

As well as the above challenges, there are specific issues that GLBT seniors face daily, particularly in relation to accessing health, housing, community, and aged care services. In the case of transgender people, there are specific issues not only in relation to accessing services, but also the impact of medical interventions and a lack of control in how they are involved with health services historically, which greatly impacts upon their trust of these services.

Many GLBT seniors are reluctant to access seniors' services because of their previous and sometimes current, experiences of homophobia and fear of negative attitudes to transgender people by service providers. In response to their experiences of homophobia and transphobia, many GLBT seniors have needed to maintain strict privacy around the expression of their sexuality and gender identity during their lives, and therefore some GLBT seniors may maintain a sense of extreme caution about whether attitudes have really changed and to whom they can safely disclose information. Being a GLBT senior may involve evaluating of the attitudes of each new service provider and worker to assess whether to be 'out' or not in each situation. Some may be concerned that, if they scratch the surface of the new tolerance, things may not have really changed at all. This concern is likely to lessen over time for some younger GLBT people who have matured in a more liberal society begin to age.

Assumption of heterosexuality and gender identity

One of the current dilemmas for service providers is identification of GLBT clients. In most cases, the health care, housing and aged care service systems assume their clients are heterosexual and make assumptions about clients' gender identities. Some are uncomfortable asking about sexual orientation and gender identity.

Yet the provision of quality health care and quality service provision requires a complete picture of clients' lifestyle and support systems, as well as barriers to accessing services and support. For GLBT seniors, this means giving us an opportunity to 'come out' by affirming their sexual orientation and gender identity to health or home care providers. GLBT people commonly have to make decisions about whether to disclose their sexual orientation or gender identity – whether to be 'in' or 'out'. An atmosphere of silence contributes to and maintains discrimination.

Trust may be a challenge, and sharing the truth about one's sexual orientation or gender identity is difficult. As a result, service providers may be unaware that they have clients and consumers who are gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender.

But there is no reason to ask anyone if they are gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender if there is no acknowledgement of this status, or if there is no relevant or inclusive service or program to benefit that person. If there is no gay-friendly symbol on the door, no staff trained in sensitivity to GLBT needs, nor even a basic program in place – why would GLBT seniors make use of your service or declare themselves to be GLBT if they do choose to use the service?

The ALSO Seniors' Project

Stage 1: Initial Needs Assessment Project

Through consultations and workshops conducted in 1998, ALSO identified the care of older GLBT people as a crucial concern and expressed the need for a feasibility study to accurately determine the needs of GLBT seniors. In 2000, ALSO conducted a pilot *Older Persons Needs Assessment Project*. One-hour recorded interviews were held with individuals who, to the best of current understanding of the GLBT community, reflected the profile of older people within this community. Participants were involved from metropolitan and rural areas.

The interview covered questions such as:

- How do you identify sexually?
- What do you see as your needs now?
- What do you see as your needs in the future?

An advisory group composed of representatives from Matrix Guild (a support group for lesbian seniors), Vintage Men (a support group for gay male seniors), Metropolitan Community Church (a denomination for GLBT people, which has a number of seniors), City of Port Philip Older Persons' Reference Group and interested individuals initially supported the research project.

In 2000, a successful application for funding was made to the Positive Ageing Unit of the Victorian Department of Human Services. Funding was approved for Stage 1 of the Project to analyse the baseline needs assessment research and to develop strategies to respond to expressed needs. In addition to this funding the ALSO Care & Benevolent Society Inc contributed significant funds and resources in support of this research.

Researchers from RMIT University were contracted to analyse the interview data collected by ALSO.² This analysis has revealed that many older GLBT people experience loneliness, isolation and considerable difficulties in accessing appropriate health care services. Based on the information provided by participants, these social difficulties were particularly evident for gay men.

² Chamberlain, C., & Robinson, P. (2002). *The Needs of Older Gay, Lesbian and Transgender People*. The ALSO Foundation: South Yarra, Victoria.

Outcomes from Stage 1

Based on the analysis, three main needs were identified:

- a) outreach services for older GLBT people who currently live in and wish to remain in their own homes;
- b) residential care options for older GLBT people, with nursing homes and retirement villages being identified examples; and
- c) community opportunities to be involved in activities and groups to overcome the social isolation that arose from the perceived ageism in the commercial gay scene.

A report of the findings from Stage 1 of ALSO's Older Persons Needs Assessment Project was published for community comment³, and provided the basis for Stage 2 of the Project: the GLBT community consultations that ALSO undertook from April to July 2003, targeting GLBT seniors across Victoria.

³ A copy of the Chamberlain & Robinson (2002) report can be obtained from ALSO and is available from ALSO's website: www.also.org.au

Stage 2: Community Consultation

Members from ALSO's Community Development Committee and the Older Persons Project Sub-Committee conducted three community consultations targeting GLBT seniors aged 50 years and over, to discuss the findings contained in the Stage 1 Report. Participants were asked to contribute to the strategic directions that ALSO may take in the coming years to respond to the needs of GLBT seniors in Victoria. Forums were conducted in St Kilda on 29 April 2003 (in conjunction with Vintage Men), Footscray on 24 May 2003, and Ivanhoe on 28 June 2003. In all, 40 people participated across the three forums (including two written responses from people who were unable to attend).

All forums produced a broad range of comments, ideas and suggestions that centred upon eight topic areas that people participating in the forums were asked to consider in small groups facilitated by ALSO volunteers. Discussions focused on:

- current and future needs of GLBT people as they age;
- types of services/programs/activities that could meet these current and future needs;
- examples of good services/programs/activities;
- examples of not-so-good services/programs/activities;
- ways to improve services/programs/activities for GLBT seniors;
- possible roles for ALSO to undertake in responding to the needs of GLBT seniors;
- possible roles that GLBT seniors could undertake themselves; and
- identifying other organisations that could play a part in responding to the identified needs.

Participants confirmed the key areas of need identified in Stage 1 of the project. Services sensitive to the needs of older GLBT people who wish to remain in their own homes and appropriate residential care options for GLBT seniors were considered essential to maintain an individual's self identity and wellbeing.

Participants also agreed with the finding that some GLBT seniors are socially isolated. They suggested that this might be for a range of reasons, including:

- lack of appropriate social activities;
- lack of acceptance of GLBT seniors in existing seniors organisations;
- rejection by family members;
- issues of confidence which may be associated with loss of a partner;
- costs associated with participation in some social activities; and
- general ageism within GLBT communities, including loss of community status and body image issues.

Additional areas of need identified at the community forums included:

- loss of identity after retiring from the paid workforce;
- knowledge about and opportunities to practice safe sex;
- opportunities to mix with GLBT people of a range of ages and generations both in a social and mentoring capacity;
- hospital discharge planning practices that acknowledge an individual's sexual identity;
- increased awareness of legal and human rights for GLBT seniors;
- being visible as GLBT seniors within the community;
- having the freedom to choose to access either mainstream or GLBT services, activities and programs equally; and
- receiving the same level of sensitivity and service that non-GLBT clients enjoy.

Stage 3: A Strategic Action Plan for ALSO

Some Possible Roles for ALSO Arising from the Consultations

In considering the responses from the three consultations, there was broad consensus that ALSO had an important role to play in responding to the current and future needs of GLBT seniors.

Five main roles for ALSO were raised across the three forums:

- Facilitation
- Advocacy
- Education and Consultation
- Care and Support
- Social Support

It was emphasised that the focus of these roles and responses were considered to apply equally to both the GLBT community and the broader society, as people reported experiencing discrimination from individuals and services in both areas.

People who participated in the consultations wanted ALSO to; take a lead role in facilitating relationships with other organisations to achieve positive outcomes for seniors, to raise awareness of ageing issues generally in GLBT communities and the wider society, and to promote and advocate for positive images of GLBT ageing. Participants wanted ALSO to promote (or where necessary, to develop) GLBT sensitive competencies in all service areas responding to the needs of GLBT seniors. An aspect of the promotion role was seen to be raising awareness of GLBT cultural sensitivity and developing a pilot training program that could be used as a basis for further training modules to meet both vocational and organisational accreditation needs.

A final area of response for ALSO that arose from the consultations was that of care and support, with diverse responses suggested, such as:

- developing a GLBT personal care agency;
- developing a friendly visiting program;
- developing a mentoring program between GLBT seniors and GLBT young adults;
- advocating for accredited care and skilling of workers; and

- campaigning for a GLBT Ombudsman that could provide advocacy services, promote quality assurance and protect rights for GLBT seniors.

Key Factors Affecting Proposed Strategic Actions by ALSO

Establishment of Victorian Government's Gay and Lesbian Health Resource Unit

ALSO has a key role to play in supporting the work of the Gay and Lesbian Health Resource Unit in addressing the MACGLH Action Plan recommendations, particularly those relating to seniors' services.

Resource Issues

Any proposed action needs to respect the limitation of a small community organisation (ALSO) which operates with minimal paid staff, reliant on volunteer support and which does not solely represent older persons.

Collaboration with other organisations and services is essential. The development of strategic alliances would enhance ALSO's leverage and capacity to undertake the strategic recommendations. There are opportunities for some proposed action items to be developed as discrete projects which could be actioned by tertiary students on placement from disciplines such as community development, welfare, nursing, allied health services and psychology.

Other opportunities exist to seek external funding for the implementation of some of the strategic recommendations contained herein from sources such as; philanthropic trusts, commercial interests, benevolent individuals (donations & bequests), government departments and the Gay and Lesbian Health Resource Unit.

There are some funds already accrued by the ALSO Care & Benevolent Society Inc through bequests and other funding sources which may be available to be utilised for the implementation of some of the strategic recommendations.

1. Facilitation

Background

Participants at the community forums recommended that ALSO has a key role to play in facilitating a collaborative approach to provision of quality services and programs for GLBT seniors. This included the possibility of facilitating a reference committee or similar group to share information and encourage greater co-operation between community groups and service providers who have an interest in GLBT seniors.

ALSO is well placed to bring together other interested organisations to discuss issues of interest and concern to GLBT seniors and to developed initiatives which lead to a better quality of life and improved service delivery.

This has already been demonstrated through the support provided to the Victorian GLBTI Rural Network, a group of representatives from a range of services and organisations across Victoria, who meet to discuss issues of concern to GLBT and Intersex people in rural areas and to provide support to each other, workers and organisers within the community. The Rural Network was instigated through and is auspiced by ALSO.

Proposed Action

- 1.1.** Initiate a Victorian GLBT seniors' "interest" committee composed of both GLBT and mainstream organisations to strengthen collaboration between agencies and services.
- 1.2.** Encourage and support members of the ALSO-auspiced Victorian GLBTI Rural Network to develop closer liaison with local government and other agencies' representatives responsible for seniors' services within their areas of operation.
- 1.3.** Initiate and participate in a working group to develop an occasional information/discussion series of community forums with topics of interest to GLBT seniors.

2. Advocacy

Background

The original tender specifications for the Gay and Lesbian Health Resource Unit provide for inclusion of sexual orientation and gender identity in standards of care developed by accreditation bodies. Support from community organisations for this action would complement the work of the Resource Unit.

Community forum participants commented that, in some areas, local councils have now established gay and lesbian advisory bodies however these tend to be concentrated on same-sex attracted youth issues. Some local councils have also developed seniors' advisory committees but needs of GLBT seniors are generally not on the agenda.

Participants also identified the lack of positive images of GLBT seniors as an issue, noting that the majority of stories and images in gay and lesbian media tend to be youth-focused.

Proposed Action

- 2.1.** Advocate for the inclusion of culturally appropriate care standards and associated staff training relating to GLBT seniors in:
 - Aged Care Accreditation Standards (Standard 3 - Resident lifestyle),
 - Home and Community Care National Standards, and
 - Healthcare and other relevant service standards as identified over time.
- 2.2.** Advocate for GLBT seniors to be included as a special needs group in Aged Care Worker Certificate III/IV courses.
- 2.3.** Encourage seniors' advisory or representative groups associated with local councils and healthcare providers to include an awareness of the specific needs of GLBT seniors in their deliberations.
- 2.4.** Review all ALSO publications to ensure that representation of GLBT senior-affirmative images (including same-sex couples) are included in all general and senior-specific publications and encompassing all forms of media (e.g. written, radio, electronic and promotional materials).

- 2.5.** Provide GLBT and mainstream media with news articles and human interest stories and information relating to and portraying the lives and experiences of GLBT seniors.
- 2.6.** Work with the Gay and Lesbian Health Resource Unit and Department of Human Services Aged Care Branch to assist local councils in addressing the needs of GLBT seniors in the development and implementation of aged care policy and services.
- 2.7.** Continue to advocate for legislative change to ensure equality under Commonwealth/State & Local Government legislation and policy in relation to same-sex attracted and transgender seniors. Particular examples include ensuring that same-sex partners are entitled to the same survivor benefits as opposite sex partners, full inclusion and protection through anti-discrimination legislation.
- 2.8.** Offer to work with the Gay and Lesbian Health Resource Unit to review and identify best-practice models of GLBT data collection/indicators and promote the use of these indicators with relevant organisations to promote the sensitive collection of data recording sexuality and gender identity indicators and those associated with same-sex relationships, as is appropriate to the context.

3. Education & Consultation

Standards

Background

Currently, community care and residential aged care services are required to comply with standards which have been developed by the Commonwealth Government (and the State Government in the area of community care). Aged Care Standard 3 relates to 'resident lifestyle' and states that *Residents retain their personal, civic, legal and consumer rights, and are assisted to achieve active control of their own lives within the residential care service and in the community.*

The Home and Community Care Program (HACC) program provides funding for community care services. HACC National Service Standards Objective 4 requires that *each consumer receives coordinated services that are planned, reliable and meet his or her specific ongoing needs.*

These standards could be broadly interpreted to include the requirement for service providers to be sensitive to the "lifestyle" of GLBT seniors; however, the current situation leaves this to chance. Feedback received through both the initial interviews and the subsequent community forums indicates that GLBT seniors are extremely sceptical about their chances of receiving such sensitive care.

The Australian Medical Association Position Statement on Sexual Diversity and Gender Identity (passed by the Federal Council of the AMA October 2002) states:

Australia's Aged Care policies make no reference to the specific needs of GLBTI older people, particularly in relation to institutional care. There is a need to recognise sexual and gender diversity within the aged care sector as this lack of recognition means that health needs of older people are not being adequately addressed with culturally appropriate care. (AMA Media Release, 31 October 2002)

International work in this area has seen some GLBT organisations developing documented quality standards in service delivery and

tools for assessing services in their application of these standards.⁴ One model has developed a charter 'mark' which signifies that a specific service have been assessed against these standards and are providing services that are sensitive to the needs of GLBT seniors.⁵

As previously mentioned, the tender specifications for the Gay and Lesbian Health Resource Unit includes the requirement for development of 'Guidelines for quality GLBTI health care, research and policy and program development' within its first two years of operation. These include 'protocols for the inclusion of sexual orientation and gender identity in standards of care developed by primary health care providers, agencies and accreditation bodies'.

Proposed Action

- 3.1.** Initiate a pilot project to develop standards for GLBT friendly/responsive seniors' service provision including:
- Development of a service assessment tool for creating and measuring GLBT friendly/responsive seniors' services.
 - Investigation of options for implementing the service assessment tool.
 - Development of an assessment tool and 'rainbow' charter mark/tick of approval for use by seniors' services assessed as GLBT friendly/responsive.

GLBT Friendly/Responsive Seniors Services Database

Background

One area of needs identified through the ALSO Older Persons Project consultations held in 2003 was that of a resource for both older GLBT people themselves and also for service providers to identify and locate services that are both sensitive and responsive to the needs of GLBT seniors.

Tender specifications for the Gay and Lesbian Health Resource Unit include the requirement for "development of GLBTI health and wellbeing data base" during its first year of operation.

The development of a GLBT-Friendly/Responsive Seniors' Services Database by ALSO could provide an accessible resource for GLBT

⁴ Examples include *The Community Standards of Practice for Provision of Quality Health Care Services for GLBT Clients* developed by the GLBT Health Access Project, Boston, USA, *Guidelines: Creating a Safe Clinical Environment for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex Patients*, Gay and Lesbian Medical Association, San Francisco, USA

⁵ Lesbian and Gay Friendly Services Assurance Charter (Navajo Project, Blackpool, Preston, Fylde and Wyre, UK)

seniors to identify services that can be accessed without fear of discrimination or experiencing homophobia. In addition, service providers assisting GLBT seniors could access this database to ensure that resources are appropriate. It will also provide an opportunity to promote GLBT friendly/responsiveness and accreditation among organisations involved in service provision to GLBT seniors. This information would then be available to inform the ongoing work of the Resource Unit in this area.

Proposed Action

- 3.2.** Develop, publish and maintain a listing of seniors' services assessed as GLBT friendly/responsive, utilising the service assessment tool (to be available online and in hard copy as part of the annual ALSO Community Directory and as a separate extract publication).

Maximising access to mainstream services through training

Background

One of the key concerns identified during the ALSO Older Persons Project consultations was the need for mainstream services to be skilled and knowledgeable in issues relating to GLBT ageing and general health and wellbeing. Most services are provided by mainstream organisations and, when considering access to services, many GLBT seniors may only have the option of accessing mainstream services. In taking this into consideration, training of workers in mainstream organisations regarding knowledge, skills and competencies necessary to respond appropriately to the needs of GLBT seniors is critical to ensuring that organisations can provide appropriate and responsive services.

Research conducted in Australia has identified the invisibility of GLBT seniors within the aged care system and its impact on the quality of service provision.⁶

Tender specifications for the Gay and Lesbian Health Resource Unit include the requirement for "development of GLBTI health and wellbeing education and training resources" including "sensitivity and awareness training programs".

⁶ Harrison, J. (1999). A lavender pink grey power: Gay and lesbian gerontology in Australia. *Australasian Journal on Ageing*, 18, 32-37.

Harrison, J. (2001). "It's none of my business": Gay and lesbian invisibility in aged care. *Australian Occupational Therapy Journal*, 48, 142-145.

Proposed Action

- 3.3.** Offer to work with the Gay and Lesbian Health Resource Unit to facilitate adaptation and extension of existing health care provider awareness and training to workers within the aged care sector.
- 3.4.** Investigate options to contribute to on-site training initiatives for seniors' services staff including agency specific training and general cross agency training.
- 3.5.** Investigate opportunities to develop an ALSO Seniors Speakers Bureau for use in community information and staff training sessions.

4. Care & Support

Background

Anecdotally, we know that many people expect to eventually move to live in either a hostel (low care) or a nursing home (high care) facility. The reality is quite different. Recent statistics provided by the Office of Senior Victorians, Department of Human Services reveal that only 4% of the population aged over 60 years live in an aged care facility. The likelihood of a placement in residential aged care is very low.

There have also been changes in the funding provided by Commonwealth Government to assist residential aged care providers. Subsidies for capital costs for construction by the not-for-profit sector have disappeared (previously \$4 subsidy for each \$1 provided by the host organisation).

The Commonwealth Government tightly controls eligibility for admission to residential aged care. To attract payment of government subsidy, an Aged Care Assessment Service must have assessed prospective residents as needing either low-level or high-level residential aged care.

The Commonwealth Government determines where aged care places are allocated based on a geographic planning ratio. GLBT seniors are not viewed as a specific needs group⁷ and are therefore subject to planning ratios. Any application for approval of a facility specifically for gay/and or lesbian and/or GLBT seniors would be considered alongside any other applications for the predetermined number of beds available in a particular area based on the population aged over 70 years.

This also applies to recipients of Community Aged Care Packages (also referred to a CACPS, or packages). Packages are a co-ordinated 'package' of care services for people with complex care needs and provide an alternative to moving into a low care facility or hostel.

Although the ratio of older people living in aged care is low compared to those receiving support within the community, we can

⁷ Section 11-3 of the Aged Care Act 1997 states "For the purposes of this Act, the following people are *people with special needs*: (a) people from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities; (b) people from non-English speaking backgrounds; (c) people who live in rural or remote areas; (d) people who are financially or socially disadvantaged; (e) people of a kind (if any) specified in the Allocation Principles.

expect that the total number of GLBT seniors needing care will increase as longevity in general increases. A service providing care for a gay /and or lesbian and/or GLBT client base only would be limited in the number of people it could support. Any decision about proceeding with a single focus facility or service would need to be supplemented with sensitivity awareness training for mainstream service providers to ensure that the greatest number of GLBT seniors is able to access quality care.

Proposed Action

- 4.1.** Investigate options for a range of housing and care models of service provision for GLBT seniors (e.g. cluster housing, co-operative housing, commercial housing developments and public housing initiatives).
- 4.2.** Investigate options for the development of a demonstration project providing GLBT sensitive home care for seniors who wish to remain in their homes.
- 4.3.** Seek funding for market research and a feasibility study to be undertaken regarding housing options for GLBT seniors.
- 4.4.** Investigate the possibility of obtaining Approver Provider status under the *Aged Care Act 1997* with a view of providing aged care services to GLBT seniors.
- 4.5.** Host a public information forum/s on housing and care options for GLBT seniors in association with relevant community organisations such as Housing for the Aged Action Group, Matrix Guild (a support group for lesbian seniors), Vintage Men (a support group for gay male seniors), Council on the Ageing (COTA) - Victoria and include government information from the Department of Health and Ageing (Commonwealth), Department of Human Services (State) and the general housing sector.

5. Social Support

Background

Findings from the ALSO Project Stage 1 indicated that social isolation is a major issue for some GLBT seniors. This was confirmed by comments from participants at the community forums who identified lack of family support, the need for someone to talk to, the need for a range of social outlets where GLBT seniors could continue to learn and where conversation is not discouraged by loud music as issues requiring action.

The period following retirement was identified as a time when some GLBT people may become isolated due to a loss of identity. Local seniors' centres and some seniors' organisations may not be welcoming of anyone who is "different".

Opportunities for intergenerational co-operation (rather than socialising only with other seniors) may promote intergenerational contact and support. This includes the possibility of GLBT seniors becoming valued as they act as mentors for GLBT youth or younger adults. The possibility of a friendly visiting program was also suggested for GLBT community members to visit GLBT seniors in their place of residence.

Participants suggested that ALSO has an important role to promote positive ageing roles and opportunities in the GLBT community, which includes educating GLBT and mainstream organisations of the need to include seniors, and how to incorporate their participation and needs into their programs.

Within residential aged care facilities and in community based day programs, the assumption that clients are heterosexual impacts on the types of programs offered and even the everyday conversations between staff and seniors.

Social connectedness has been identified by VicHealth as a major determinant of mental health and wellbeing in their 1999-2002 Mental Health Promotion Plan.

Proposed Action

5.1. Investigate options to develop a GLBT seniors' friendly visitor/volunteer program.

5.1.1. Liaise with Vintage Men, Matrix Guild, Victorian AIDS Council, People Living with HIV/AIDS (and associated groups, e.g. Positive Women) and Lesbian Cancer Support Group to discuss current initiatives and opportunities for development of expanded friendly visitor/volunteer programs for people caring for GLBT seniors.

5.1.2. Initiate discussions with existing friendly visitor/volunteer programs regarding the possibility of enhancing their existing programs or developing a specific program targeting the GLBT community (e.g. Do-Care and friendly visiting programmes provided by ethno-specific service agencies).

5.2. Investigate options to develop social activities for GLBT seniors.

5.2.1. Encourage community based gay and lesbian organisations to organise events for gay and lesbian seniors to be held during the annual Victorian Seniors Festival (e.g. Inaugural ANZ Rainbow Tea Dance held by ALSO in association with Matrix Guild and Vintage Men during the Victorian Seniors Festival 2004).

5.2.2. Contribute to action to address the Ministerial Advisory Committee on Gay and Lesbian Health recommendation that all local councils be encouraged to run support groups for gay men and lesbians who may feel excluded from mainstream support groups and from GLBT social networks and community groups.

5.2.3. Investigate possibilities for monthly GLBT seniors' activities at mainstream seniors' centres in selected local government areas.

5.2.4. Incorporate drop-in and planned programs to improve social connectedness for GLBT seniors in any GLBT Community Centre auspiced by ALSO.

5.2.5. Liaise with GLBT community and mainstream (where appropriate) religious organisations to encourage a collaborative approach to provision of social activities for GLBT seniors.

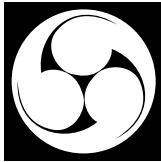
5.3. Investigate options to develop intergenerational social and mentoring activities with participation by GLBT seniors.

5.3.1. Seek input from Vintage Men, Matrix Guild, Minus 18 and local municipality based same-sex attracted youth groups to the development of intergenerational social and mentoring activities.

5.4. Investigate options to develop GLBT seniors' caregiver support activities.

5.4.1. Liaise with Vintage Men, Matrix Guild, Victorian Aids Council, People Living with HIV/AIDS (and associated groups, e.g. Positive Women) and the Lesbian Cancer Support Group to discuss current initiatives and opportunities for development of expanded caregiver support programs for those people caring for GLBT seniors.

5.4.2. Initiate discussions with existing caregiver support programs and organisations (e.g. Carers Victoria, Alzheimer's Australia Vic) regarding the possibility of enhancing their existing programs or developing specific programs targeting the GLBT community.



The ALSO Foundation

ABN 18 006 130 650

ALSOCare & Benevolent Society Inc.

ABN 66 376 381 795

Level 1, 6 Claremont Street, South Yarra, Victoria 3141

Phone: (03) 9827 4999 Fax: (03) 9827 1622

Email: also@also.org.au Homepage: www.also.org.au

MEMBERSHIP FORM - INDIVIDUALS

MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES – Please choose one category

- | | | | |
|---|--|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Full \$33 | <input type="checkbox"/> Concession \$28 | <input type="checkbox"/> Associate* \$24 | <input type="checkbox"/> Volunteer* \$10 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 3 year membership \$80 | | <input type="checkbox"/> Interstate / Overseas \$24 | |

*Those marked * require prior ALSO approval*

YOUR DETAILS

<input type="checkbox"/> Renewal – Membership number: _____		<input type="checkbox"/> Change Of Address Only	
<input type="checkbox"/> New			
<input type="checkbox"/> Mr	<input type="checkbox"/> Ms	<input type="checkbox"/> Mrs	<input type="checkbox"/> Dr
First name: _____		Surname: _____	
Address: _____			
Suburb: _____		State: _____	Postcode: _____
Phone: AH: _____		BH: _____	
Fax: _____		Mobile: _____	
Email: _____			
Please send one set of mail to my Partner & I. Partner number: _____			

DONATIONS

Donations of \$2 or more are Tax Deductable \$ _____

PAYMENT DETAILS

Attach proof of concession or Associate membership.
Please find enclosed Cash or Cheque for the amount of \$ _____ or charge my:

Bankcard Mastercard Visa (Amex No Longer Accepted) with the amount of \$ _____

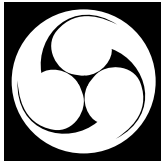
Card number: _____ Expiry date: _____
_____/____/____

Cardholder name: _____
Signature: _____

DECLARATION

In the event of admission as a member, I agree to be bound by the objectives and rules of The ALSO Foundation.

Signature: Date: ____ / ____ / ____



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DONATION FORM

I would like to make a donation to the ALSOCare & Benevolent Society Inc. Donations of \$2 or more to ALSOCare & Benevolent Society Inc. are tax deductible. All donations will be acknowledged and a receipt issued.



NAME: Organisation / Business:**OR**

Mr / Mrs / Ms / Dr

ADDRESS :

Suburb:..... **State:**..... **Postcode:**.....

Daytime Telephone Number: **Mobile:**

Email:

I enclose a cheque for \$..... I do NOT wish my donation to be publicly acknowledged.

Please make your cheque payable to ALSOCare.

Cash should not be sent in the mail but can be dropped in to the ALSO office.

Please debit my Bankcard / Mastercard / Visa card with \$.....**Once / Monthly**
(Amex No Longer Accepted)

Credit Card Number: ____ / ____ / ____ / ____

Card Expiry Date: __ / __ **Cardholder Name:**

Cardholders Signature:.....

PROJECT ALLOCATIONS

- Youth Services & Programs
- Older Person's Services & Programs
- General Support Services & Programs
- Rural Services & Programs
- Drug & Alcohol, Education & Prevention

MONTHLY DONATIONS

I wish to make a monthly donation by authorising ALSO CARE to debit my Credit Card account (as per the above section) on the 1st of each month. Accordingly, please debit my account with \$.....per month. I understand that a receipt for the total amount I have donated in a Financial year will be forwarded prior to 30th June each year.

Signature:.....

Date: / /

ALSOCare & Benevolent Society Inc is a registered Charity allowing the organisation to carry out the philanthropic aims of community assistance and support for gay men and lesbians.

About ALSO

The ALSO Foundation was formed in 1981, in part as an outcome to the successful decriminalisation reforms of sexual activity between adults of the same gender by the then Victorian Hamer Government.

ALSO comprises of two individual organisations working together to achieve results. The ALSO Foundation is a not for profit company, limited by guarantee, which conducts the direct services and programs of ALSO. The ALSO Care & Benevolent Society Inc is a registered charity that works to fulfil the philanthropic goals and functions of the organisations.

2004 sees our 23rd year of operation, providing leadership and support to the gay and lesbian community. Support that has evidenced itself in many forms throughout the years. Some of our key areas of work include:

- Conducting research and projects in support of GLBT people. This GLBT Seniors - Strategic Plan is a one example of our current and ongoing work.
- Providing cash grants to community organisations to support initiatives and programs. ALSO has provided over \$1m in grants to worthy community organisations and initiatives.
- Leading community building through instigating the development and growth of community organisations and services.

Many of the organisations and services that exist within the GLBT community were formed by ALSO, including the Victorian AIDS Council, Midsumma Festival, Gay and Lesbian Switchboard to name but a few. Current examples of ALSO community building includes our auspice of Minus 18 Youth group, the 2004 GLBTI Multicultural Conference and the ALSO Rural Network.

- Providing direct support to people in need through information, referrals, social interactions and resource assistance.
- Lobbying for social and legislative change and reform through active leadership and participation on matters of significance to gay and lesbian people. The most prominent current example of this is our involvement in leading a process of achieving national agreement for federal law reform in the 2004 election.

ALSO is a community organisation that thrives on the involvement and sense of ownership of those in the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender community along with our many partner agencies and friends. To be involved in the directions and services of ALSO please contact our office on (03) 9827 4999 and inquire about membership or involvement in our many programs. You can also get information on the services and programs of ALSO at our web site www.also.org.au