



THIS IS OZ LAUNCH

SPEECH NOTES FOR STEVIE CLAYTON

Let me start by acknowledging the traditional owners of the land on which we gather today, the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation and pay my respects to their Elders past and present.

This Sunday is IDAHO – the International Day Against Homophobia.

It's held annually on May 17, the date in 1990 when the World Health Organisation removed homosexuality from its list of mental illnesses.

At risk of showing my age, that means I spent the first 30 years of my life in a world where our official bodies like the UN told people they were mentally ill just because they loved people of the same gender.

1990 may seem a long time ago now but discrimination against gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people – or GLBT people – still exists in many forms here in Australia and all around the world.

In many countries, being gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender is illegal and punishments are harsh including torture and execution.

In others, like here in Australia, discrimination is commonplace.

Some discrimination is obvious, like unequal laws, verbal abuse or violent physical attacks.

Other discrimination is more subtle, like being made to feel invisible or abnormal.

Here in Australia, we've come a long way over the last 30 years in terms of civil and human rights for GLBT people.

However, same-sex couples still can't get married and can't adopt children, and some churches, schools and institutions still discriminate against us.

Then of course there's the issue of homophobic violence and gay hate crimes.

Government research shows that gay men and lesbians in NSW are, respectively, four and six times more likely than the general population to be assaulted.

The same research shows that 85 percent of people in the GLBT community have experienced some form of homophobic violence, be it abuse, harassment or assault.

As Australians, we pride ourselves on the principles of freedom and equality that have become hallmarks of our society.

However, unjust laws and unfriendly attitudes mean that GLBT Australians don't always get a fair go.

And while the reforms that have been made recently at the Federal level are a step in the right direction, there's still a long way to go.

And while sometimes it feels like a lonely journey, we know that a great many Australians share our vision for a country that embraces diversity and accepts people for who they are.

So today, we're launching *This Is Oz*, an online photo gallery where people can speak up for an inclusive Australia.

Part art project, part human rights campaign, *This Is Oz* is all about making Australia a place where everyone belongs.

To get involved all you have to do upload a photo of yourself with your own hand written or printed message.

Your message can celebrate diversity, challenge homophobia, or support GLBT rights – whatever YOU want to say.

Basically what we're creating is a simple yet powerful way for people to come together and speak the same words but with many voices.

As well as lots of everyday folk, we've already got TV stars, sportspeople, politicians, musicians and lots of other high profile people on board.

People like Olympic champion Matthew Mitcham, Greens Leader Sen. Bob Brown, Former High Court judge Michael Kirby, Federal Housing Minister Tanya Plibersek, NSW Deputy Premier Carmel Tebbutt, Sydney Lord Mayor Clover Moore, MTV VJ Ruby Rose, Actor Jessica Tovey,

dancer and singer Rhys Borbidge and celebrated chef and author Christine Manfield.

We greatly appreciate their support as well as all the support we've already received from hundreds of everyday Australians.

We now look forward to getting the support of lots more Australians from all walks of life.

With images being uploaded to the site for the next three months.

As well as all our actual and potential contributors, we'd also like to thank all our project partners which include:

- NSW Police Force
- NSW's Attorney General's Dept
- Diversity Council of Australia
- Amnesty International
- The Gender Centre
- Twenty10
- NSW Gay and Lesbian Rights Lobby
- National LGBT Health Alliance
- NSW Law Society Young Lawyers
- Highschoolers Against Homophobia

We'd also especially like to thank the City of Sydney for helping to finance the project as well as our media partners Evolution Publishing and samesame.com.au for helping to promote the campaign.

And our thanks to all of you for coming along today and supporting us in our efforts to make Australia a place where everyone belongs.

www.thisisoz.com.au