



AMBASSADORS &
BRIDGE BUILDERS
INTERNATIONAL

July 2017
June 2018

CEO ANNUAL REPORT

Ambassadors & Bridge Builders International (ABBI) has continued its growth to be a significant voice in the LGBTI/faith and religion space within Australia and beyond.

It's been a big year from July 2017 through to June 2018, which is what this report covers. We've finally seen marriage equality become a reality in Australia. **It was a long hard battle.** ABBI played a [small part](#)

- [An open letter to Australia's pastors and church leaders](#)
- [Your marriage equality survival guide during the 'debate' \(from a survivor\)](#)
- [Hop, hop, stall, stop. Love wins – in the end](#)
- [The No Campaign: Scaremongering 10/10 – Originality 0/10](#)

But the success thanks goes to the organisations dedicated to the cause, the LGBTI organisations that supported them and the 1,000s and 1,000s of LGBTI people, friends, family and allies who got behind the cause. I'm not sure people realise just how significant this will be in [years to come](#); It's paramount to the impact people coming out of the closet has had.

I remember the morning the results of the postal survey were to be announced 15 November 2017. I must admit that I was not as excited as so many were. The final result was that 61.6% said YES and 38.4% said NO. Why was I not excited? We won yes, but more than a third of Australians said they didn't want gays and lesbians to demonstrate their love and commitment (for life) to each other. They didn't want to allow gays and lesbians the same beauty, joy and security of marriage that they enjoy. The [fear-mongering of the NO campaign](#) had some impact I feel.

Since the marriage equality announcement and law passed, the anti-gay contingent in our society have continued in their battle, moving the debate from marriage equality to religious freedom and what they have labelled, 'gender politics'. This will continue of for some time yet. Conversion therapy has become a hot topic and been flagged as a major issue of reform by people in the LGBTI community. As you most likely know, this has been [a personal cause of mine since 2000](#) and 2019 is shaping up to be a year where major progress will be made in bringing the outdated, discredited and harmful practice of conversion therapy to an end.

ABBI's mission and commitment is now more relevant than ever.

Ambassadors & Bridge Builders International (ABBI) is committed to ending unnecessary suffering caused by ignorance and misinformation about sexual orientation and gender identity. ABBI's mission is to create understanding and acceptance for LGBTI (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex) people, empower community members and build bridges with churches, religious organisations and leaders.

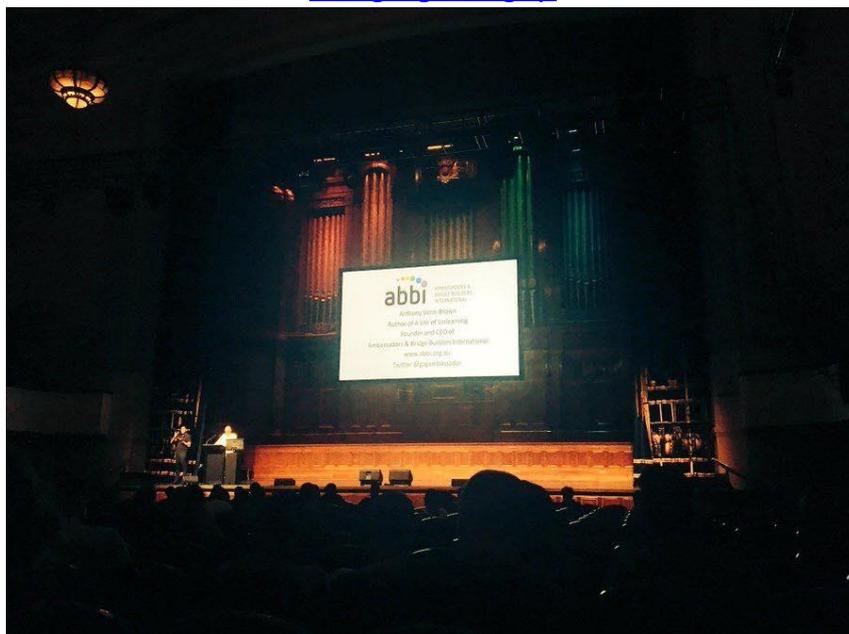
Some Highlights

During the last financial year, ABBI has been extremely busy in research and education in a variety of settings.

Presentations of 'The Quest to Cure Queers' Melbourne, Sydney Adelaide



Better Together Conference in Melbourne Town Hall The LGBTI community and the Christian Church – dispelling the myths and bridging the gap



Rainbow Reflections – Mardi Gras 40 years anniversary

[What happened before for the first Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras](#)

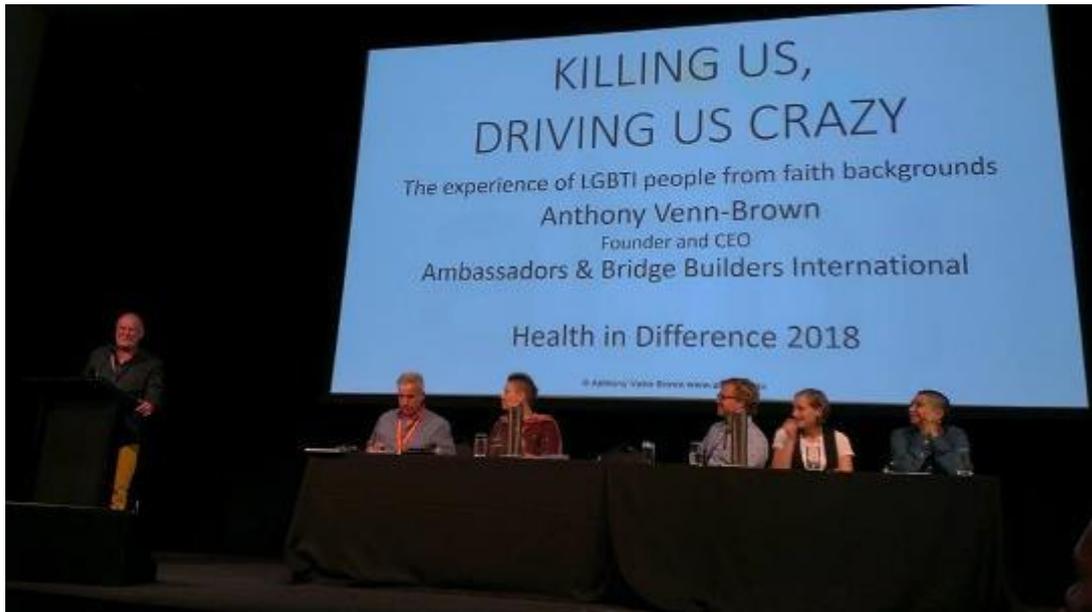


The Melbourne Age and Sydney Morning Herald Feature

[‘I am profoundly unsettled’: inside the hidden world of gay conversion therapy](#)

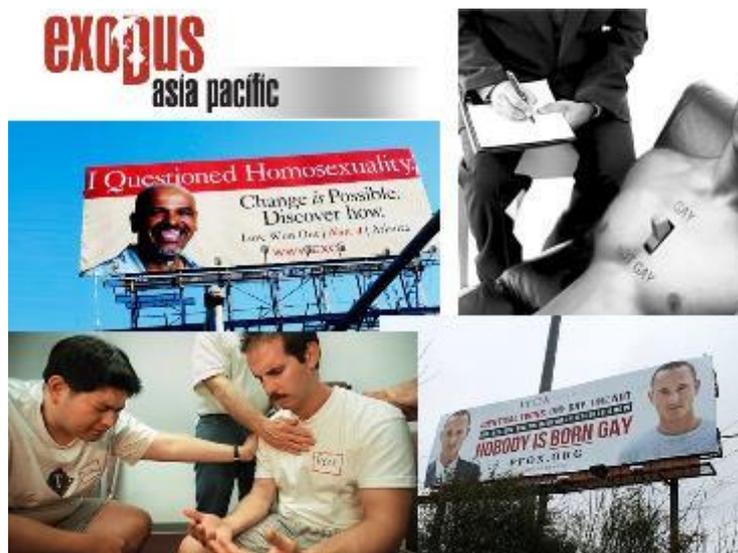


LGBTI National Health Alliance Conference
KILLING US, DRIVING US CRAZY
The experience of LGBTI people from faith backgrounds



Report on Gay Conversion Therapy in Australia

Released in May, this in-depth, behind the scenes account was the first of its kind in Australia. Our 30-page report, with over 100 references, has found its way into the hands of Human Rights organisations, LGBTI health and rights organisations, politicians and journalists. Just from our site it has been shared on social media over 1325 times (first time shares only are counted) plus 100s have emailed us for copies of the PDF which has been shared ??????? times from via email.



Buzzfeed interview

While in the UK I had an amazing interview with Patrick Strudwick from BuzzFeed. The article was viewed up to 200,000 times on the BuzzFeed site alone.

Website and Social Media

ABBI's philosophy is:

"The enemy is not individuals, churches, 'ex-gay' organisations or political parties; the enemy is ignorance. Change is created by focusing our energies on overcoming the latter instead of attacking the former."

Our website continues to be a source of communication and information for people to anonymously look for answers.

We now not only have our regular blog articles but we have added an audio section as well which covers a variety of topics including homosexuality and the Bible verses.

- [Homosexuality, Christianity and the Church \(Part 1\)](#)
- [Homosexuality, Christianity and the Church \(Part 2\)](#)
- [Andrew's story – gay in a Pentecostal Church](#)
- [Being an LGBTI Ambassador and Bridge Builder](#)
- [Anthony Venn-Brown interview on Sydney talk back radio](#)

A great addition that has been added is the feature at the bottom of the page for people to share posts and resources on social media. Sometimes within a day of a post going up it has been shared several hundred times. What of course we don't know is how many times it is shared on Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn beyond that initial visit. It has been particularly encouraging to see the types of content shared from our site change. This year also we broke new records; double the number of shares from last year.

The numbers on the right at the amount of times the article has been shared

March 8, 2017	Welcoming, accepting, affirming – don't get stuck	2,691
August 21, 2017	An open letter to Australia's pastors and church leaders	1,298
May 10, 2018	REPORT – Gay Conversion Therapy in Australia	1,173
August 8, 2016	Australian Anti-gay Group, Salt Shakers, to Close	1,154
October 19, 2006	Bayside – first Pentecostal church to accept gays	781
September 6, 2017	Survivor Tips – Your Postal Survey Survivor Guide (from a survivor)	487
April 17, 2018	KILLING US, DRIVING US CRAZY	459
September 10, 2015	Gay Religious Suicide – why we can never count the cost	446

Our social media profile continues to grow and is used regularly to distribute up to date and relevant information. Our audience is growing.

	2016	2017	2018
<u>YouTube Channel</u>	150 subscribers 137,125 views	184 subscribers 179,481 views	202 subscribers 193,969 views
<u>ABBI Facebook page</u>	1249 page likes	1,576 page likes 1,501 followers	1,960 page likes 1,891 followers
<u>A Life of Unlearning Facebook page</u>	1632 page likes	1,660 page likes 1,575 followers	2,046 page likes 1,967 followers
<u>Twitter</u>	1445 followers	1,499 followers	1,622 followers
<u>LinkedIn</u>	1574 connections	1,733 connections 1,680 followers	1,848 connections 1,780 Followers
<u>ABBI newsletter</u>	1457 subscribers	1654 subscribers	2708 subscribers

The above are just some highlights. Other activities have included:

- Radio and print media interviews
- Dialogue with religious organisations and church leaders. Because of its controversial nature, much of the dialogue work that ABBI does is behind the scenes and confidential.
- We continue to work towards the end of ex-gay/reparative/conversion organisations and practices in Australia.
- Responding to email inquiries for help and information
- Working one on one with individuals experiencing faith/sexuality conflict.

Financial support

There has been an increase in giving this year and also an increase in expenses. Our faithful regular monthly supporters has gone from 30 to 42 individuals. Some give \$20 others \$100 or more per month. We have seen an increase in one off donations this year which has been wonderful. In total just over 170 people have made donations to ABBI over this time.

We are grateful for every single one who gives generously and sacrificially to this important and sometimes life-saving work. If all the people we have helped in some way gave \$1 a day we would be able to expand our work in a significant way and focus completely on our mission. If you'd like to join us on this journey, then you can organise that on [this link](#). If you'd like to have a conversation about ways to help ABBI with fundraising we'd love to talk to you. If this of interest to you then please email us at info@abbi.org.au

A full auditors financial report is available. Once again just email us info@abbi.org.au and we'll get that straight off to you. Our thanks go to Martin Coxell who contributed his time to complete the audit.

Finally, I must thank the [board of ABBI](#). Our president, Ian Green, Secretary Tim Daly who efficiently keeps our records in order, Treasurer Bill Wang, Hannah Baral, Anthony Barbara, Byron Barnes and Marguerite Foxon. I am so grateful for their encouragement, support, feedback, expertise and wisdom. They are a great team to work with.

We look forward to serving you, the LGBTI community and the faith community for another twelve months and into the future.

Anthony Venn-Brown

Founder and CEO

Ambassadors & Bridge Builders International