

# Mark

Mark was an incredibly open person to interview. We knew from our chat before the interview that he had been kicked out of the Army in 1988 when the [Special Investigation Branch \(SIB\)](#) discovered he was gay. What we did not know was about the other mental and physical traumas Mark had experienced in his life, including candid descriptions of sexual abuse during his teenage years. There was an extra twist that made Mark's story seem so important: it is not unique. Certainly the abuse he suffered was horrible and happened in its own way. Yet, Mark was actually the second of three interviewees in a row who experienced some form of childhood physical or sexual abuse. When we reflected back on other interviews, and as the project continued, we found that the theme of childhood physical and/or sexual abuse surfaced in at least a dozen of our interviews. This was of course a minority, and this project was neither designed for nor equipped to conduct statistical analysis or substantially probe the links between LGBTI identities (our one intersex participant had also been abused), childhood abuse and military service. Yet, we present Mark's story here to begin posing some hypotheses, and also to highlight further the effects of the LGB ban on those caught in the 1980s.

Mark was born in Melbourne in 1969 but from the age of 11 grew up in rural Victoria. Until that point his mother had stayed home to look after Mark and his much younger siblings while his father was a senior public servant with the Federal government. His childhood in the city was, he says, a classic suburban one for kids of his class: 'the backyard pools, grandparents around, time with the neighbours, riding bikes up and down the street, playing cricket in the street'. Mark's father had a stressful role; he suffered a mental breakdown which prompted him to stop working and move the family to an inherited property a few hours north-east of Melbourne.

At first, country life ~~at first~~ continued in a similar vein. Mark always had a million activities on the go: long bike rides with friends; hunting rabbits and foxes with his collection of guns; taking out the occasional tree. Mark was a member of the local gun

club and participated in competitive target shooting. School figures very little in his memories until after the family moved to the country, where he was enrolled in a Catholic school which was fun, but not challenging. Mark was a quick learner and was easily bored by the slow pace of classes. Teachers mistook this to be a lack of application on his part.

The move to the country represented a major turning point in Mark's life. His mother moved out not long after arriving on the property, and Mark has not seen her since he was 11. Mark was left living with his incredibly strict father, who was ex-Army Reserve. His father became violent; whether that was associated with his mental breakdown or his wife's departure is unclear, but Mark remembers that there were plenty of beltings. This seems to track back through the family: Mark's grandfather had been 'very, very strict' on Mark's father. Somehow, through this period of abuse Mark managed to be a straight A student until about Year 10. At that stage, Mark decided the situation with his father was untenable and Mark moved out of home to live with a mate and his mate's father.

Mark describes the move as 'Out of the frypan, into the fire'. The mate's father began to abuse Mark sexually. Mark recalls: 'So, I was in a situation where my best friend's dad was basically abusing me, and I was almost handed around at sex parties, which left me traumatised. It left me very distrustful of people, even as far as I actually went to the local Anglican Church and the priest there, ultimately he was just trying to get into my pants.' The mate's father insisted that Mark pay board, so he worked a couple of casual jobs, such as at the local gardening centre and mowing lawns. Mark had to be sure that he always came up with the rent – 'otherwise other things were expected'. Not surprisingly, his schoolwork fell off and he started to drink – at first being plied with alcohol by his mate's father. He was still attending school and he actually managed to keep his grades up. Yet, as Mark recalls, 'I was probably verging on alcoholism to the stage where I would literally have a flask that I would take to school and I would be drinking that during the day.'

The relationship between childhood physical and/or sexual abuse and homosexuality is heavily researched and debated. It is uncomfortable topic, not just because of its graphic nature and the psychological scars abuse leaves, but also because

of the many myths and misunderstandings – often perpetuated by organisations and individuals hostile to homosexuality. Perhaps the most common myth is that gay men are more likely to perpetrate sexual abuse against children. Reputable researchers have well and truly debunked that lie (even though it still circulates).

What is less known, though, is that psychology research since the 1980s has consistently found that LGB people are more likely to report having suffered childhood sexual abuse. One meta-analysis of 65 refereed articles published between January 1980 and November 2013, covering nine countries and 62 045 total participants across the studies, concluded that 22.2 per cent of gay or bisexual men and 36.2 per cent of lesbian or bisexual women were survivors of childhood sexual abuse. This compares with approximately 7.6-7.9 per cent of heterosexual men and 18-19.7 per cent of heterosexual women.<sup>1</sup> Given these high rates of childhood sexual abuse among LGB people, it should not be surprisingly (even if any less distressing) that more than 10 per cent of our own interview participants were survivors of childhood physical and/or sexual abuse.

Where research is thinner is examining why LGB people are more targeted for abuse as children. It is an intriguing question given many LGB people do not realise their sexuality until at least their teenage years, let alone come out as children. The majority of psychology studies focus either on quantitative data or long-term health effects of childhood sexual abuse. It is harder to do research with LGB people's actual abusers because they would need to be identified and interviewed. That said, researchers postulate that for lesbian and bisexual women, some of the factors that may contribute to their higher rates of being targeted for abuse are their young expressions of non-normative gender behaviour, or the consequences of being rejected because their sexuality leading them to situations more vulnerable to abuse (e.g. substance abuse, running away or being kicked out of home).<sup>2</sup>

For gay and bisexual men, expressions of gender non-normativity can similarly make them targets of physical violence. Adults or peers may abuse gay or bisexual boys as punishment for transgressing what is 'acceptable' male behaviour, or for behaving in a 'feminine' manner.<sup>3</sup> Presumably, sexual abusers sense vulnerability in boys who express gender non-normativity, or who are struggling internally with their sexuality. This was not the case for Mark, as he was naturally confident and relatively open as a bisexual

from the age of 14. Perhaps this was why his mate's father targeted him – seeing him as someone who would enjoy sexual encounters with men. We will never know why the abuser pursued Mark. He died about 17 years ago having never faced justice.

A pattern common to child abuse cases, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity, is that the abusers know how to trap their victims. There was no one Mark could talk to about his abuse, much less report it. Mark worried that it would not just come back on him, but that if he said anything his mate might end up out on the street, too. They were not lovers, but they were close and they did 'play around' with each other. Mark describes his teenage bisexuality in a 'you take what you can get' kind of way. He had girlfriends – one of whom he was going steady with for several months – but there were always boys as well.

As one problem piled on top of another, Mark applied to join the Army. One very common reason to enlist, both among LGBT members and others, is to use the armed forces as a form of escape from the drudgery of their lives. There are also longstanding historic ties between the armed forces and Australia's shameful history of institutional abusive treatment of children. The Stolen Generations, the Forgotten Australians, the less-documented history of pressuring single mothers to surrender their children for adoption well into the 1960s and the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse show a deep current of cruelty in Australian life going back generations. Many survivors from these groups joined the armed forces as a site of escape and opportunity. Military life offers discipline, steady income, training, regular meals, accommodation, the opportunity to travel and a social paradigm that is amenable to people accustomed to, or seeking, structure. Children raised in institutionalised settings, where abuse was rife, often made fine soldiers, sailors or air personnel.<sup>4</sup>

The known but rarely talked about sexual and physical abuse of children within families also has played a significant part in many people joining the ADF. For people like Mark, this was the main motivating factor. He remembers:

I just felt so trapped in a small country town which is probably the reason what's actually pushed me to actually go into the Army because it was a way – 'This is my get out of here course'. So, when I was about 16½ I actually applied to join the Defence Force, went through all the testings and just before my eighteenth birthday I

actually got called up. Basically I got called in and found myself on my way to boot camp.

The anecdotal echoes from the other LGBT Defence members – suggesting the ADF as an escape route for abuse survivors – has scholarly support. Psychology researchers from the USA have identified higher than average reporting of childhood abuse among active-duty and retired military personnel than in the population as a whole. This is, of course, not restricted to LGBT survivors of abuse. John Bossnich and Robert Bossarte hypothesise that ‘military enlistment among survivors of childhood abuse is a sign of resilience, i.e., having the wherewithal to break away from a tumultuous environment. A complementary hypothesis may be that the structure, training, and fellowship of the military facilitates resiliency among some survivors of childhood abuse’.<sup>5</sup> The test of Mark’s resiliency was to come much quicker than he imagined, living as a secret ~~homosexual~~ gay man in the Australian Army.

On the bus to basic training in September 1987, Mark and his fellow recruits had their first taste of homophobia. A sergeant boarded and delivered a speech on how drugs would not be tolerated and how there were no gays in the military. They were, he explained, ‘weak people and subsequently they would have a breakdown and would then try to actually climb into bed with somebody else during training’. This may have been the popular line, but it was not the official policy. Rather, DI(G) PERS 15-3 (defence instructions (general) personnel) said that gays and lesbians were a health threat, could prey on minors, were subjected to blackmail, and were a threat to troop cohesion and morale. The explanatory note accompanying DI(G) PERS 15-3 noted: ‘Should the issue of the reliability, loyalty and personal bravery of homosexuals be raised, you should accept that this is not in dispute, rather it is the impact they have on group cohesion which adversely affects combat effectiveness of that group. This is particularly important in situations involving the stress of operations.’

In a 1989 letter to the Defence Force Ombudsman, the Chief of the Defence Force, General Peter Gration (Richard Gration’s father), even asserted that the ban was meant to protect LGB service members from bullying: ‘Experience has shown that members involved in homosexual relationships have a tendency to dissociate themselves from the group, may cause hostility within the group, or become ostracised by other

group members.’<sup>6</sup> Apparently, on a bus, en route to Kapooka, far away from the watchful eye of politicians, media and the Defence Force Ombudsman, the grassroots view on the ban was more grounded in homophobia than any spin produced by the top brass.

As Mark soon learned, there were drugs for those who wanted them. There were also, of course, homosexuals. At basic training at Kapooka in Wagga Wagga, Mark had high hopes for hijinks. Here he was, a ‘horny little 18 year old’, thinking: ‘Oh yeah, showering with other guys, cock-slapping each other’s legs in the shower, three guys in a single shower cubicle so you can all be showered within ... five or six minutes’. In fact, this was far from the truth; Mark quickly found that after a full-on day of basic training, when the lights were out at 10pm, he was too tired even to wank! There was one recruit whom Mark thought might be gay, and whom he thought had twigged to him. But it was a long time before they discussed it, and they discovered the same fear of being caught by the other had held them back. All of this was going on in an environment where straight men could engage in what might look like homoerotic play: slapping each other’s arses in the showers, suggestive remarks and grabbing each other’s cocks. If they had been pressed to explain themselves they would have laughed it off as mucking around. As Mark summarises the sentiment: ‘It was okay to kind of do all these things gay, but as long as you weren’t gay.’

Mark joined the Army during the AIDS epidemic, the same year as the famous grim reaper advertisement. The commercial was effective at getting out the message about safe-sex, but it was also controversial because many gay men felt that the grim reaper was being used to represent and stigmatise gay men.<sup>7</sup> Mark remembers one homophobic joke linked to HIV/AIDS: how do you give CPR to someone with AIDS? The answer was mimed: a boot stomping on a chest, air blown in the patient’s general direction. The ADF, for its part, initially responded to the AIDS epidemic with a similar attitude to homosexuals: they were so few and far between in the ADF, so one would expect HIV infection rates to be negligible. In January 1988, the Minister for Defence Personnel, Ros Kelly, announced that all ADF recruits would be required to undergo HIV testing, as well as those employed in particularly sensitive positions. The policy cautioned ‘HIV positivity discovered as a result of testing ... is not to be used as a basis

for disciplinary investigation' against gay men.<sup>8</sup> Oral histories from LGB members of the nursing and medical corps suggest otherwise.

The ADF policy on HIV/AIDS has actually been relatively unchanged over the past 30 years. Those prospective recruits who test positive are not allowed to enlist, and those who seroconvert (contract HIV) while serving are not discharged unless they are classed as category three or four HIV infection. Even so, there are severe restrictions placed on HIV positive members; they are not deployable overseas and they face severe restrictions on postings, transfers, access to courses and promotions. In 1998, the Full Bench of the Federal Court upheld the ADF's right to dismiss an HIV positive soldier on the grounds that the 'inherent requirements of the job' exempted the ADF from HIV-related protections under the *Disability Discrimination Act*. This case happened while highly active anti-retroviral therapy (HAART) was just becoming available (1996), and over 20 years later people with HIV live perfectly healthy lives. Only time will tell if ADF policies catch up with medical science.

Returning to Mark's era, though, HIV/AIDS was one of but many validations for homophobia. Gay-bashing was a pastime for homophobes who stalked gay and bisexual men at popular beats, especially in major urban centres. At least one ex-soldier recalls his mates based at Holsworthy in western Sydney used to drive into the city to do a bit of 'poofster bashing'. Such violent homophobia also tangentially touched Mark. After thriving at Kapooka, Mark entered the Signal Corps and was posted to Watsonia in Melbourne. There he heard about one episode where a soldier saw two men engaging in oral sex when passing by their dormitory. Word went out and a gang was rounded up. Both men, it was said, 'had the shit beaten out of them' and ended up in hospital. That this happened on a Thursday night – pay night, traditionally booze-up night – presumably added to the ferocity of the attack. On another occasion a man was said to have been thrown down the stairs because someone said he was gay (it turned out he was not).

The depth of straight men's homophobia has been the focus of much attention by psychologists and psychiatrists, and there is an argument that in at least some cases such homophobia masks and deflects homosexual desires. Regardless of the reasons, the *effect* of the violence was clear – to prevent any public expression of real, as opposed to blokey, homosexual desire. The violence reported on these occasions was, Mark says, 'another

very, very good reason to actually hide' that he had such feelings. The fact that neither he nor anyone else really knew what happened to these men reflected the atmosphere of fear.

You had to keep everything to yourself. That was probably the most stressful aspect of it – actually having to lead a complete double life. In fact, you could not acknowledge feelings, you could not express feelings because apart from the fact that you knew it potentially put your career at risk. It very much potentially put your health and safety at risk because you were aware of the fact that guys did get bashed.

It was during this period in 1987 that Mark became increasingly homosexual in his desires. He vividly remembers the last time he had sex with a woman, during which he realised that he was not (or was no longer) bisexual.

Mark trained as the signal unit's quartermaster. Though Mark continued to be based in Melbourne, by sheer fortune his unit wound up on a brief posting as guard duty at Victoria Barracks in Sydney. This was just down the road from the gay heart of Sydney on Oxford Street. For his colleagues, Oxford Street and Kings Cross were treated as freak shows, where they would laugh at the gay men as they headed to the heterosexual strip clubs. For Mark, it was easy to slip away and find more satisfactory entertainment. The jumbling of the seedier side of life, especially in Kings Cross where drugs, alcohol, sex shows and sex workers were all available without regard to distinctions of gay or straight, clean-cut or sleazy, made it easier for people to navigate across the boundaries. Mark did this by rarely going to exclusively gay venues, so that if he ran into anyone he was able to plausibly deny his behaviour. The mixed nature of the venue meant that he could pass as one of the straight patrons, even if there were gay people present.

Oxford Street was 'an eye opener'. Mark remembers especially Anzac Day 1988 when he was returning from guard duty at the Cenotaph in Hyde Park. As he walked back along Oxford Street in his Army uniform, he thought: 'This is so weird. Here's me, a gay soldier, wearing a military uniform, and there's all these gay guys dressed up as soldiers.' It was during his Sydney posting that Mark met a gentleman named Robert and headed for a drink in one of the bars. Robert would write him letters – sexually explicit love letters – and eventually the inevitable happened: Mark left one sitting on his bedside table



in the barracks, where one of the other men in his unit saw it. He was saved by the fact that it was signed 'R', and he was able to pass it off as having come from 'Rebecca'. Whether Robert was intentionally in the habit of being careful is unclear, but such coded writing was common enough among gay men for decades, if not longer.

Mark uses the term 'double life' to describe his time in the Army. It is common among many LGB people who served under the ban, and what comes across in both Mark and others' interviews is both their carefully thought through strategies, as well as the mental stress that the double life created. For instance, besides the coded letters, other LGB ex-service members describe strategies such as maintaining personal items in a spare bedroom to pass their partners off as 'housemates'; bringing opposite-sex dates to mess functions; or driving in erratic patterns when visiting a sauna, beat or sexual partner for fear of being followed. Mark says:

You just adapt. It's horrible, but you just adapt. It's survival so you lead the life of the good military person, the good straight boys, even soldiers wanting to protect and serve the country. But then on the other hand, you have this other side of you that when it's only when you actually feel safe are you then able to actually then go on, and then actually let that side of yourself be expressed ... But it was that constant stress of 'Will I be found out?'

Even though Mark was effective at hiding his homosexuality, his developing relationship with Robert was opening up a side of him that he did not want to hide anymore. Mark describes the relationship with Robert as a catalyst for events that led to his dismissal.

Back in Melbourne, Mark found himself caught up in an investigation – not into homosexuality in his unit, but into drug-taking and dealing (possibly the same one that ensnared Yvonne Sillett – see pXX). His description of the interrogation conducted by the SIB makes for harrowing reading:

It was like every textbook interview – good cop, bad cop, bait and switch – every type of interview to try to catch you off guard; befriend you, throw in a weird question here, anything to try to catch you off guard. But what evidently was apparent in hindsight was that the detectives did realise the fact that I was actually hiding something.

What he was hiding, of course, was not drugs, about which he knew very little, but that he had been exploring gay life in Sydney. After five hours he finally thought, 'I can't handle this anymore' and confessed to being gay, hoping to end the interview. They continued questioning Mark for another 20 minutes, finally leaving him alone, with some water and a sandwich.

However, this was not the end of the matter. As every other person found out to be gay, lesbian or bisexual during this era describes, the military police wanted to know everything. They returned to interrogate Mark again for another two or three hours. The questions were incredibly explicit: 'everything from the sexual positions that I did, how I did it, whether I was receptive, whatever ...'. The original tri-service policy on homosexuality had purported to protect Defence members from invasive investigations that unnecessarily violated their privacy. The 1974 guidelines stated:

Questions may be directed to establish the circumstances of the case, identify others involved and ascertain whether action on related matters, such as possible compromise on security, is required. Questions on the detail of sexual acts is to be avoided except to the minimum necessary to establish that homosexual conduct has in fact occurred and that the person concerned fully understands the nature of the allegations.

Such questions, as attested by Mark and others, were common practice during the ban era, even though they contravened the instructions. What the respective police were always most interested in obtaining were the names of other LGB Defence members.

The interrogation finally ended with the SIB officers claiming to be satisfied that he was not connected with the drug issue, and they declared that he was 'not a security risk anymore because you're out and our concern is that you could have been blackmailed for being gay'. A friend, a senior flight commander in the Air Force with legal training and responsibilities, told Mark that coming out was the right thing to do. Once Mark told them he was gay, they were under an obligation (or so it was said) to treat the matter with a degree of discretion. The ADF preferred a quick, clean, discreet break with LGB service personnel, rather than the long drawn-out process of court martial. Like all other LGB personnel caught under the ban, Mark had a choice: he could

either request his own honourable discharge, or contest the matter and receive a dishonourable discharge. Like the majority, Mark elected for the honourable discharge.

Most interview participants speak of their discharge – traumatic as it often was – being complete within a matter of days. For some unknown reason, Mark says that the whole process of discharge felt like months. He was in ‘total limbo land’, though he was still turning up to work and running the store in his unit. He recollects, ‘I was still out there, going out there shooting guns, throwing hand grenades, doing all the training and everything else, even though the fact that I knew that I felt part of me was like, “I’m doing this training; but why? At any stage this discharge is going to come through and it’s going to become irrelevant.”’ Mark only told one friend in his unit what happened, so presumably everything seemed business as usual to his other colleagues.

By day Mark’s Army life appeared normal, but inside he was desperate. He says, ‘I remember that was one of the most traumatic and stressful times in my life. I contemplated suicide many, many times. The anger that I actually felt, the self-hatred, the resentment was really, really awful’. Mark was a survivor. One gay officer from the RAAF, whose job included processing the discharge paperwork for homosexuals, remembers two gay men who suicided in the 1980s – one of whom was under investigation. Statistics on homosexual discharges over the period 1987–1992, compiled in response to a question in a Senate Estimates Committee, also indicate that one of those under investigation suicided. We will never know the number of LGB Defence members who took their lives when they were caught for homosexuality or dressing in clothes associated with the opposite sex, not to mention the others who may have suicided as a result of bullying or witnessing the persecution that Mark had seen.

Mark loved the Army and had come to believe in many of the values that it stood for, yet he felt that he was being treated callously. Mark began visiting the Prahran sauna 55 Porter Street as a refuge. He was not necessarily there looking for sex; it was merely a space ‘where I wouldn’t have to worry about being seen because it wasn’t a public space. I wouldn’t have to drink and do what everyone else does at gay bars; I could sit there and have cups of tea if I wanted ... it was just somewhere I could just go, sit there on the lounge and be around other gay people and just be myself’. These places often operated as social places as well as sex venues. Porter Street was one of these types of venues,

sometimes assumed by outsiders to be brothels. They charged an entrance fee and then left men to hook up (or not) as they saw fit, without further money changing hands.

As the time dragged on, Mark's mental health deteriorated. On one occasion he was pushed too far and lashed out. Walking with a friend down Commercial Road in South Yarra – well-known for its variety of gay venues – a man verbally abused them, and then pushed and slapped them from behind. At first Mark told his mate to ignore the provocateur, but then suddenly:

That black rage that was there got unleashed; within five seconds, this guy was on the ground. I think I broke his jaw; I think I broke his nose – I definitely broke his nose because it was on the other side of his face. I know arguably one could say it was in self-defence because I definitely felt we were being threatened, but I mean it scared me the amount of rage that was actually loose.

Mark remembers that he felt that there was nowhere he could get help or support. While services such as the Gay & Lesbian Switchboard existed, given Mark's isolated history in the Army, it is not surprising that he was not aware of them. Scholars refer to the idea of 'community attachment' when discussing such matters – whether gay men or any other of the diverse identities that exist were actively participating in the community – reading the papers, listening to gay radio, attending social groups, protests or clubs. It seems Mark had little of this beyond Porter Street. The discharge finally went through in August 1988, which Mark describes as being a 'massive relief' at the time.

Mark briefly returned home, where he both reconciled with and came out to his father. Mark's words were: 'I play on both sides of the fence', which he reckoned was the easiest way to tell him. His father's response was: 'Oh, I thought that might have been the case'. For about 12 to 18 months, his father would say, 'It's a stage you're going through. You'll grow out of it.' Eventually, Mark's dad realised he would not grow out of it and accepted Mark: 'So, in that respect my dad has been very, very supportive.' Over the years Mark has grown close to his siblings as well, though he believes they do not entirely approve of his lifestyle. Still, he regularly talks to them and their kids know that Uncle Mark is gay.

By the time of his dismissal Mark was starting to put together a new life. Like most gay servicemen who were not officers, his circle had really been among civilians.

He returned to Melbourne, first working a night job pressing socks for a manufacturer, and then he got a job as a tram conductor and tram driver. He had friends, knew where to go, and started living in a four-bedroom house in Hawthorn where all of the residents were gay. By now he was completely out. He recalls:

I basically decided then while one does not have to be obvious about one's sexuality, I'm never going to hide it, which the irony has been that – I mean, since then I've worked in the building industry quite extensively and even had guys actually come up and say to me: 'Oh Mark, such-and-such, so-and-so is saying you're gay'. And my comeback would be: 'No, I'm not, but my boyfriend is', and they would not believe me because I was not the gay stereotype. Maybe through conditioning or that I'd learned to hide it, but I just figured that I was comfortable enough with myself that I didn't have to be [flamboyant].

Mark's reference to the building industry, which he began working in around 1994 after he survived a bout of cancer, is an important one. Working as a builder was a way to regain weight and fitness that he had lost through the cancer treatment. Though stereotypes suggest the hyper-masculine building industry to be a homophobic environment, Mark's experience did not find it to be so: 'I put it down to the fact that most people actually got to know me for being "Mark" first before they found out I was gay.'

Mark was aware of the extent of homophobia still in society. One night standing outside Mandate, a gay dance club in St Kilda, a police van went by and used its PA to abuse those outside: 'Get off the street, you AIDS-ridden faggots!' Victoria Police in the 1990s were renowned for [such homophobic](#) views. The most famous example was the police raid at Tasty Nightclub in Melbourne's CBD in August 1994, when they detained all of the patrons for up to seven hours looking for drugs, and strip-searched hundreds of them. Mark was going to join friends at Tasty that night, but something came up at the last minute and he cancelled. After the Tasty raid, the public backlash, lawsuit and massive compensation paid out to the patrons marked a turning point, and the Victorian Police set up the Gay and Lesbian Liaison Officers (GLLOs). Incidentally, a RAAF airman interviewed for this project *was* caught up in the Tasty Nightclub raid. By then the

ban was lifted and he was open about his sexuality, but it still made for some uncomfortable conversations with his commanding officer the following week.

Around 1998, Mark's then-partner was accepted into the University of New South Wales. Mark packed up his life on about three days' notice and moved to Sydney. He answered an advertisement in the local paper looking for an operations manager at a commercial furniture company. Mark attributes his success in that role to a mixture of his experience in the building industry and his logistics and ordnance training from the Army. After a few years Mark changed careers and started working in a call centre for American Express. For 8½ years he worked his way up the corporate ladder, retiring with a 'golden handshake' as a senior account executive. Since then he has been living a more laid-back life, still doing some handyman jobs here and there, but essentially enjoying an early retirement with his partner of almost ten years.

In Sydney Mark had more involvement in the advocacy and support side of the LGBT community. For years he volunteered as a coordinator with the AIDS Council of NSW (ACON), helping to organise fundraising activities. He currently volunteers for an ACON peer outreach program at one of the gay saunas/sex clubs, wearing a t-shirt emblazoned 'Sexpert, ask me anything'. This is Mark's way of giving back to the community, answering patrons' questions about sex and sexual health. He has coordinated floats for Mardi Gras. One was called Cheerleaders for Love, organised for a friend's fiftieth birthday, which ended up with a contingent of 80 marchers wearing white netball skirts, pom poms and gold 'tis-tant-tizzle' wigs. The other float was around the theme, Pretty in Pink. For that float, 'I made myself a gladiator's outfit from scratch – spent God knows how many hours sewing and sticking glitter everywhere. I think the only way I finally got rid of the glitter out of the carpet in this room we're sitting in now was when they pulled up the old carpet and replaced it.'

All up Mark served only 11 months in the Army, but he is included because Mark's story is one of survival. The traumas in particular are the events that stand out, but sadly are not unique. Looking back he observes: 'I haven't made a complete stuff-up of my life so therefore things can't be too bad'. The treatment Mark experienced for being gay killed all loyalty he felt to the Army, and not surprisingly the ex-services associations hold little attraction for him, nor does he march on Anzac Day. He

recognises that things have changed in the ADF, and he believes that further progress will need the ‘dinosaurs to die out’ before homophobia will be eradicated once and for all. As he best puts it:

The irony is now actually having spoken to military personnel – serving military personnel – in the last couple of years who were saying, ‘We now have to do diversity training and everything’, it just seems so bittersweet because it would have been a job and a career that I would have loved to have continued doing, but unfortunately, that was taken away from me because that was the status quo back then.

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<sup>1</sup> Yin Xu and Yong Zheng, ‘Prevalence of Childhood Sexual Abuse among Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual People: A Meta-Analysis’, *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse* 24, no. 3 (2015): 324.

<sup>2</sup> Sharon C. Wilsnack et al., ‘Characteristics of Childhood Sexual Abuse in Lesbians and Heterosexual Women’, *Child Abuse & Neglect* 36, no. 3 (2012): 260.

<sup>3</sup> Stephen Brady, ‘The Impact of Sexual Abuse on Sexual Identity Formation in Gay Men’, *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse* 17, no. 3-4 (2008): 361.

<sup>4</sup> Noah Riseman, ‘The Stolen Veteran: Institutionalisation, Military Service, and the Stolen Generations’, *Aboriginal History* 35 (2011): 57-77.

<sup>5</sup> John R. Blosnich and Robert M. Bossarte, ‘Childhood Abuse and Military Experience - Important Information to Better Serve Those Who Have Served’, *JAMA Psychiatry* 73, no. 3 (2016): 196. See also John R. Blosnich et al., ‘Disparities in Adverse Childhood Experiences among Individuals with a History of Military Service’, *JAMA Psychiatry* 71, no. 9 (2014): 1041-48.

<sup>6</sup> General Peter Gration, Chief of Defence Force, to Defence Force Ombudsman, 17 May 1989, reproduced in *Commonwealth Ombudsman and Defence Force Ombudsman Annual Reports 1988-89* (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1989), 189.

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<sup>7</sup> Paul Sendziuk, *Learning to Trust: Australian Responses to AIDS* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2003).

<sup>8</sup> 'New Defence Policy on Testing,' *Sydney Star Observer* (5 February 1988): 1.