

Archive No. 105

Lesbian Line

The Lesbian Line collective started meeting on 26 March 1981 with the aim of setting up a phone information, support and referral service for lesbians by lesbians. The collective was made up of lesbian feminists and members were expected to make a commitment for 12 – 18 months. Lesbian Line started operating on 2 July, 1981 and answered the phone every Thursday 12.30 – 2.30pm and 6 – 10pm. Lesbian Line shared the phone with Women's Liberation Switchboard and was situated in the Women's Liberation Buildings in 113 Rosslyn Street, West Melbourne then 295 Victoria Street, West Melbourne and 28 Gertrude Street, Fitzroy.

Apart from staffing the phone the members of the Lesbian Line collective met on a regular basis to organise publicity for relevant newsletters and the 3CR women's programs (this initially involved a mail out to 300 organizations) to organise and update the resource file, to work out the roster (two lesbians on roster at any one time) to attend the Women's Building Council meetings and to design and print the posters and stickers.

Lesbian Line handled many hundreds of calls every year, including queries from women questioning their sexuality and needing to talk through the issues with a friendly and sympathetic listener, from lesbians who wanted to know where the lesbian bars and hangouts were, or just needed to talk because they'd broken up with their girlfriend or had been fired because of their sexual preferences or any one of a number of difficulties lesbians faced on a day to day basis and had no-one else they could talk to about what was bothering them.

All calls were written up in the Lesbian Line logbook (no names were ever used). Finances were raised by donations, raffles, fundraisers and selling food at women's dances. The collective paid an affordable rent to the Women's Building Council, had a Lesbian Line banner they carried at various marches and demos and by 1983 were listed in the telephone directory.

After the WL Building closed in 1992 Lesbian Line moved with Lesbian Open House to Haywire, the Young Women's Housing Shopfront at 409 Johnston Street, Abbotsford. But when Open House moved with Haywire to 20 Smith Street, Collingwood, and because the Gay and Lesbian Switchboard had been increasingly handling many of the lesbian calls since 1991, Lesbian Line decided to fold in October 1995.