

Pride in our future: Victoria's LGBTIQ+ strategy 2022-32

Annual update 2023-24
summary



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Acknowledgement

The Victorian Government acknowledges Victorian Traditional Owners of Country and pays respect to their cultures and Elders past and present.

We recognise that LGBTIQ+ people are living on lands that LGBTIQ+ Aboriginal people have lived on for millennia. Aboriginal knowledge has the potential to enrich efforts towards LGBTIQ+ equality.

We acknowledge that the impact of colonisation still exists today, and we are seeking ways to correct past wrongs, including through Treaty. We are working together to create a better future for all Victorians to enable true self-determination for Aboriginal people.

Through Treaty, the Victorian Government will continue to build understanding and respect of the intersection between Aboriginal and queer cultures to benefit all Victorians.

We acknowledge the diversity of Aboriginal Victorians, their communities and cultures, and the intrinsic connection of Traditional Owners to Country.

Language statement

We recognise the diversity of Aboriginal people living throughout Victoria. While the terms 'Koorie' or 'Koori' are used to describe Aboriginal people of southeast Australia, we have used the term 'Aboriginal' to include all people of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent who are living in Victoria.

The term 'LGBTIQ+' refers to people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and gender diverse, intersex, queer or asexual. We use variations of the term throughout this strategy depending on the language originally used. We use other terms like 'TGD' (trans and gender diverse) or 'LGBT' depending on specific communities referenced. We also note that some Aboriginal communities use the terms 'sistergirls' and 'brotherboys'.

Queer is often used as an umbrella term for diverse genders or sexualities. Some people use queer to describe their own gender or sexuality, as an identity that does not correspond to heterosexual norms. For some people, especially older people, 'queer' has negative connotations, because in the past it was used as a discriminatory term.

The words 'our' and 'we' in this document refer to the Victorian Government.



The strategy

Victoria's first whole-of-government LGBTIQ+ strategy *Pride in our future* was launched in February 2022. The strategy is our plan to advance equality and inclusion for Victoria's diverse LGBTIQ+ communities in all government work over the next decade.

In the second year of the strategy, we have made significant progress on implementing early actions, delivering key policy commitments in 2023-24 and aligning the delivery of priority actions with outcomes in the *Pride in our future: outcomes framework*.

Next, we will focus on completing early actions and progressing medium- and long-term actions including to ensure all LGBTIQ+ Victorians are visible, safe and celebrated.

Pride in our future is the roadmap to becoming a state where all Victorians feel safe, are healthy, have equal human rights and can live wholly and freely.

We are working to reduce discrimination against LGBTIQ+ people by reforming Victorian laws.

We are not at the start of this journey here in Victoria but we recognise that there is still much to be done. Our commitment to a future where LGBTIQ+ Victorians participate fully in the economic, educational, political, community and social life of our state is unwavering.

Through the implementation of *Pride in our future* we seek to build LGBTIQ+ communities that are self-sustaining, and create long term, systemic change across multiple service systems.

Every Victorian has a role in making Victoria a safe, welcoming place for all LGBTIQ+ people. LGBTIQ+ Victorians, allies, families, communities, departments and portfolio areas contributed to the achievements in the second year of the strategy. Even though we know there is much more to do, this work shows a whole-of-government and whole-of-communities commitment to come together and advance equality.

The heart of effective policy design and implementation are the lived experience voices of our communities.

The lived experience of our LGBTIQ+ communities is central to how the Victorian Government implements the strategy. Our work is guided by:

- the Ministerial LGBTIQ+ Taskforce
- LGBTIQ+ Justice Working Group
- LGBTIQ+ Health and Wellbeing Working Group
- LGBTIQ+ Disability Inclusion Expert Advisory Group
- LGBTIQ+ Education Reference Group
- Victoria Police LGBTIQ+ Portfolio Reference Group
- all LGBTIQ+ Victorians.

In partnership with LGBTIQ+ communities, we are progressing our four priority areas:

- equal rights and freedoms
- equitable, inclusive and accessible services
- visibility to inform decision-making
- safe, strong and sustainable communities.



Commissioner for LGBTIQ+ Communities highlights



Continuing to roll out the Rainbow Ready Roadmap to build inclusion across rural and regional communities and supporting the rural and regional LGBTIQ+ leadership program.



Facilitating a NAIDOC week panel on the Voice Referendum at the Victorian Pride Centre, which was live streamed across Victoria.



Hosting a session for LGBTIQ+ performers about 'How to Stay Safe Online' with Victoria Police and the eSafety Commissioner to support their preparation and engagement with the Melbourne Fringe Festival, Midsumma Festival and Regional Pride Festivals.



Hosting a 'Celebrating Libraries as Safe Spaces for LGBTIQ+ People' event in partnership with the State Library of Victoria and Public Libraries Victoria, which 100 stakeholders, including librarians, attended from across Victoria.



Supporting Pride in Our North's 'Beyond the Rainbow Lanyard' summit focused on inclusion for LGBTIQ+ people within outer suburbia.



Current actions under the priority areas



Priority area 1: Equal rights and freedoms

We have delivered actions that support Victorians to have equal rights and live wholly and freely. We delivered justice services for LGBTIQ+ communities, supported survivors of conversion or suppression practices and improved police responses to LGBTIQ+ communities.

To improve equal rights and freedoms, we:

- Supported survivors of conversion or suppression practices through the Civil Response Scheme.
- Consulted on how we can strengthen anti-vilification protections under civil law and strengthen and streamline anti-vilification offences under criminal law.
- Funded Q+Law, a free state-wide safe entry point for legal assistance, to deliver justice services, at the Victorian Pride Centre.
- Started work to develop and deliver an LGBTIQ+ Justice Action Plan.
- Victoria Police also continued efforts to improve police responses to LGBTIQ+ communities and sex workers by providing training for police and police and protective services officers.





Priority area 2: Equitable, inclusive and accessible services

We established new and improved existing services to ensure LGBTIQIA+ people of all ages can access services that meet their needs, including education, health and mental health, housing and homelessness, and justice.

To increase inclusivity in mainstream services and support community-controlled organisations to deliver affirming services, we:

- Partnered with Rainbow Health Australia to deliver How2 inclusion training to service organisations.
- Engaged education experts to update relationships, sexuality and consent education teaching and learning resources in Victorian schools so they are LGBTIQIA+ inclusive.
- Continued to build the capacity of the LGBTIQIA+ community-led sector through the LGBTIQIA+ Sector Strengthening program and the LGBTIQIA+ Organisational Development Grants program.
- Supported delivery of Rainbow Door's LGBTIQIA+ helpline, to support to LGBTIQIA+ victim survivors of family violence.
- Supported Pride in Place to provide over 570 LGBTIQIA+ people experiencing or at risk of homelessness with safe, inclusive and intersectional support.



To improve the effectiveness of health and wellbeing services, we:

- Rolled out public fertility care services to offer more people the chance to become parents.
- Provided \$4.2 million to 20 community-led organisations, including LGBTIQIA+ programs, through the 2023-25 Diverse Communities Mental Health and Wellbeing Grants Program.
- Identified a partner to deliver a co-design process to develop a proposal for a state-wide community-managed intersex Health and Wellbeing Centre.
- Supported gender affirming care for around 1,000 people through the Trans and Gender Diverse in Community Health initiative.
- Delivered \$900,000 to eight organisations to provide mental health and support services.



Priority area 3: Visibility to inform decision-making

We laid the foundations to address LGBTIQIA+ data gaps by starting a LGBTIQIA+ data availability and reform agenda across the Victorian Government.

To build the evidence base to understand what LGBTIQIA+ people need, we:

- Delivered an outcomes framework so we can measure our impact and report on our progress.
- Changed health data collections so services collect a patient's sex at birth and their gender.
- Improved how Victorian Public Service (VPS) agencies collect data from their employees to ensure data collection is inclusive and appropriate.
- Supported LGBTIQIA+ data and research to ensure effective and inclusive services by working with Thorne Harbour Health, LaTrobe University and Drummond Street Services.
- Increased diverse LGBTIQIA+ representation on Victorian Government boards.
- Co-designed programs with LGBTIQIA+ people and communities, including QHub, Pride in Ageing, Pride in Place, and an LGBTIQIA+ Suicide Aftercare program.





Priority area 4: Safe, strong and sustainable communities

We supported LGBTQIA+ events and festivals to create inclusive communities, social inclusion in sport and LGBTQIA+ people to have safety and security in their everyday lives.

To ensure that LGBTQIA+ people are free from harassment, feel safe and experience inclusion, we:

- Supported VPS employees who need to change their sex or gender listed in systems.
- Researched the experiences of LGBTQIA+ people on public transport networks.
- Launched two safe spaces for young LGBTQIA+ Victorians – QHub in Ballarat and Geelong.
- Supported the Melbourne Victory vs Adelaide United A-League Pride Cup and increased LGBTQIA+ inclusion and participation in sport with the Together More Active Program 2023–27.
- Funded events and festivals with a focus on celebrating the diversity of LGBTQIA+ communities.

Case study

Pride in Place is helping LGBTQIA+ people find safe and sustainable housing

Pride in Place offers LGBTQIA+ people experiencing or at risk of homelessness a safe and inclusive space to find housing and connect with support services they need.

Pride in Place helped Amelia, a transgender woman and refugee, overcome significant challenges. After fleeing her home country due to discrimination and violence based on her sexuality and gender identity, Amelia arrived in Australia feeling lost and unsure of how to navigate housing, employment, and community. Unfortunately, the initial housing situation Amelia found wasn't safe, she suffered violence, including exploitation, forced sex work, and had her identification stolen.

Amelia's story took a turn for the better when she found Pride in Place. After a referral from a health service, they connected her with safe and welcoming support. Pride in Place supported Amelia with a successful referral to a brand-new community housing build where she was offered a long-term lease. Pride in Place's network also provided her with help to find a counsellor to assist with processing past experiences, assisted her in navigating Centrelink and connected her with local LGBTQIA+ groups, fostering social connection and a sense of belonging. Today, Amelia thrives in her new home. In her own words, Amelia credits Pride in Place with saving her life.

