

Consultation report

prepared for the City of Stonnington

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First phase consultation summary report: City of Stonnington LGBTIQ+ Action Plan 2021-2025

April 2022



Document purpose and contents

Document purpose

This document provides a summary of consultations undertaken for the City of Stonnington in March and April 2022.

Conversations were designed to gather feedback to inform the development of an LGBTIQA+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, Queer and Asexual) Action Plan for the municipality.

This document presents an overview of:

- the focus group engagement and online survey including their content and engagement activities
- stakeholders who engaged in conversations
- a summary of insights collected from participants
- key messages and themes

The structure of the document is set out below.

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A note on language

This report contains several terms that may not be fully understood. These relate to **sexual orientation** (lesbian, gay, bisexual, asexual), **gender identity** (transgender, gender diverse, non-binary, cisgender) and **variations in sex characteristics** (intersex), as well as **dominant systems, beliefs and assumptions** (heteronormativity and cisnormativity) that can lead to various **forms of unequal and poor treatment** including discrimination and violence (homophobia, biphobia, transphobia). For LGBTIQA+ people, these factors can overlap with other identities and experiences to compound disadvantage (**intersectionality**).

For a detailed description of these terms and others, see the Victorian LGBTIQ+ Inclusive Language Guide (<https://www.vic.gov.au/inclusive-language-guide>).



Background

Introduction

The Stonnington Council Plan 2021 – 2025 establishes a vision for “a safe, inclusive and creative city that celebrates people, history and culture, and embraces a healthy and sustainable way of life”.

One of its key actions is to develop an LGBTIQ+ Action Plan with the support of an LGBTIQ+ Advisory Committee established in 2021. The LGBTIQ+ Action Plan arose from a Notice of Motion in early 2021 and is linked to the *Stonnington Health and Wellbeing Plan 2021-2025* which was released in late 2021.

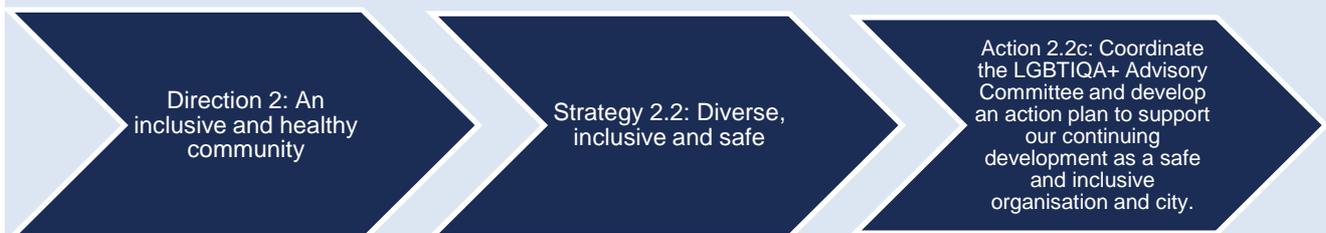
A series of focus groups were held between 3rd and 24th March with internal and external stakeholders including Council staff, community members and local service providers.

The focus groups were complemented by an online survey that was open from 1st March – 3rd April 2022 and supported by a background paper.

Background paper

- An introduction setting the context for development of the City of Stonnington LGBTIQ+ Action Plan
- Demographic and health and wellbeing information about the Stonnington community
- An overview of LGBTIQ+ people and families living, working, studying and socialising in the City of Stonnington
- An overview of broader LGBTIQ+ community needs and expectations, including of local government
- A summary of Council's work with LGBTIQ+ communities to date
- Project links to broader Council policy and strategies

Annual Council Action Plan 2021/22

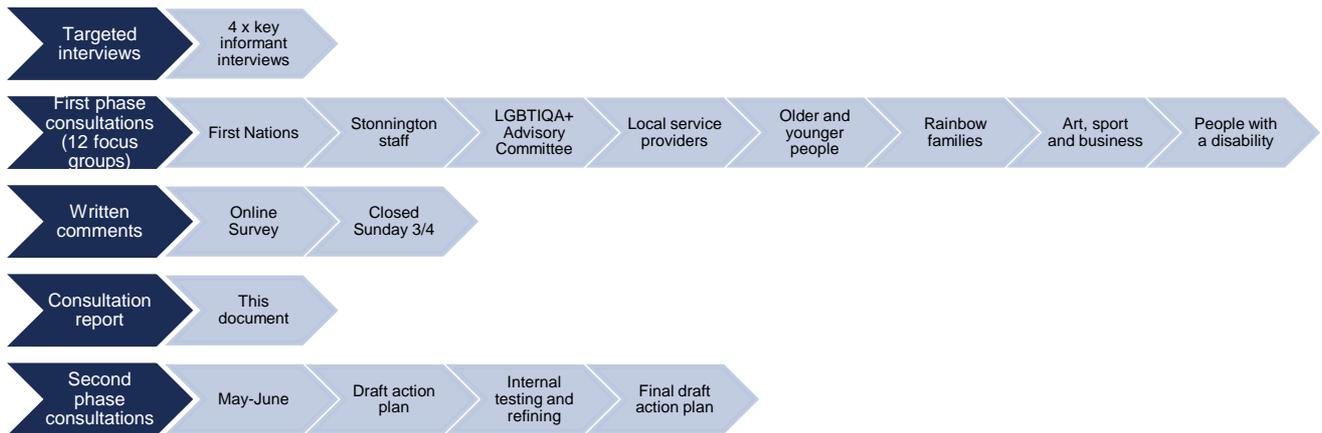




Approach and participants

Approach

An engagement plan was developed to maximise opportunities for community participation which included a blend of targeted and open focus groups relevant to different interests and experiences. These were offered during and out of hours, including weekends. Engagement was complemented by an online survey on Council's digital engagement platform *Connect Stonnington*.



Participants

One hundred and thirty two people took part in the engagement opportunities offered in March and April 2022 representing different ages, cultural backgrounds, abilities, sexual orientations and gender identities, family structures and relationships. Participants also represented a diverse range of local services and other community interests.

A further **25 young people** took part in an allyship event hosted by Stonnington Youth Services in March 2022, in partnership with the Zoe Belle Gender Collective and the Centre for Multicultural Youth.





Overview: Focus groups

Focus groups

In total, twelve online focus groups were offered during March 2022. Focus groups ranged from 90 minutes to two hours in length.

The primary purpose was to engage as diverse a range of community perspectives as possible within available resources. The focus groups comprised a mix of open invitation and targeted sessions.



Methodology

Each focus group included three discussion rounds broadly focused on participants' future vision, existing gaps and barriers, and opportunities to improve experiences and outcomes for LGBTQIA+ people in the City of Stonnington. Themes distilled from each discussion are reflected in this report.

Discussion 1: Vision for LGBTQIA+ people in the City of Stonnington

Thinking about LGBTQIA+ people and their families who live, work, study and recreate in the City of Stonnington. They are thriving, healthy and happy...

Q. What are their lives like?

Q. What do they see/hear/feel experience?

Discussion 2: Current gaps, barriers and limitations

Thinking about the factors that prevent or limit this vision...

Q. What are the current issues for LGBTQIA+ people and their families in the City of Stonnington?

Q. What barriers do these communities face?

Q. How have communities been impacted by COVID-19?

Discussion 3: Opportunities for a stronger future

Thinking about opportunities to bridge where we are and where we want to get to...

Q. What steps can be taken to ensure LGBTQIA+ people and families in the City of Stonnington are thriving?

Q. What do you think Council could or should do?

Q. What role should LGBTQIA+ communities and others play?



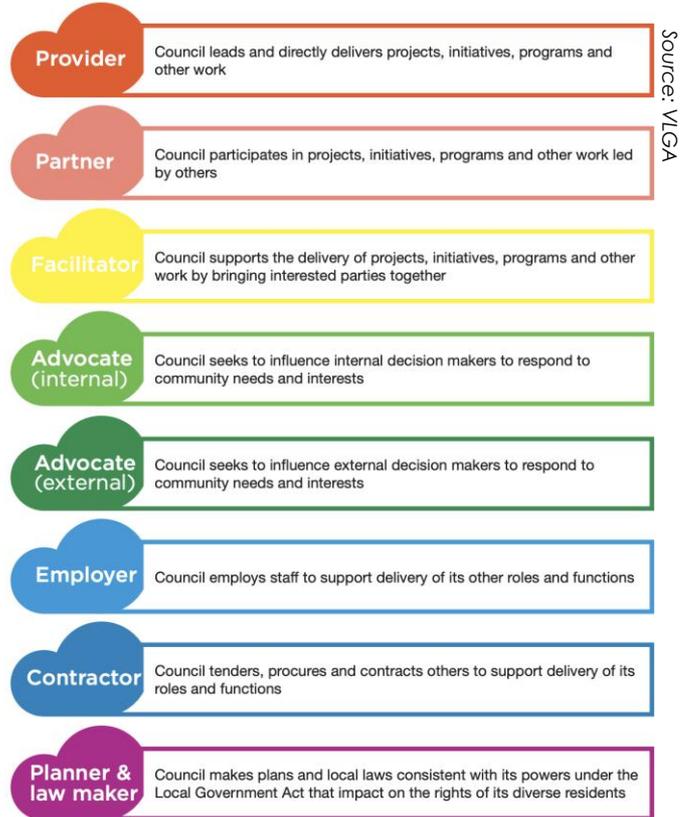
Overview: Online survey

Online survey

A survey was hosted on the online digital engagement platform *Connect Stonnington* from early March to early April. Final questions were determined by Council's communications team and 67 responses were received.

Key questions

1. What are the most positive things for LGBTIQ+ people and their families in the City of Stonnington?
2. What would you most like to improve for LGBTIQ+ people and their families in the City of Stonnington?
3. What are the gaps in services and support that would benefit LGBTIQ+ people and their families in the City of Stonnington?
4. What could Council do to better support the LGBTIQ+ community in the City of Stonnington?
5. How should Council better engage with the LGBTIQ+ community in the City of Stonnington?



Online survey: Key findings

The most commonly identified positive things about Stonnington for LGBTIQ+ people were an *inclusive and accepting community, LGBTIQ+ community connection and visibility, and LGBTIQ+ inclusive venues, groups and businesses*

Over one third of survey respondents were unsure about the most positive things for LGBTIQ+ people and families in Stonnington

The improvements for LGBTIQ+ people most commonly identified included *availability of support services; social connection, events and safe spaces; council visibility and leadership; LGBTIQ+ representation and visibility; and community awareness and understanding*

From the list of options provided (see page 9), *Safe public spaces and venues* was identified as the most important way to positively influence LGBTIQ+ experience, followed by *measures to address mental health, access to services and programs, and community connection*

Specific actions Council could take to improve visibility and leadership included *public and visible support for LGBTIQ+ communities, proactive inclusion and diversity messaging, partnerships and advocacy, and internal / external training and education*



Future vision and community strengths

Future vision

Focus groups commenced with an exploration of the future vision for LGBTIQ+ people and families in the City of Stonnington. Participants identified key aspects of LGBTIQ+ experience as well as of the community in which LGBTIQ+ people and families live, work and study. Aspects of a future vision included:

LGBTIQ+ people and families are healthy and happy	LGBTIQ+ people and families are safe and visible	LGBTIQ+ people and families are included and connected	The community celebrates diverse LGBTIQ+ identities
A range of accessible services is locally available	Broad health and wellbeing inequalities are addressed	Council demonstrates consistent leadership	Intersectional experience is considered / addressed

Community strengths

Focus group and online survey participants were invited to identify current community strengths and assets that contribute to a supportive environment for LGBTIQ+ people and families in the City of Stonnington. The most commonly identified community strengths included:

- An inclusive, diverse and accepting community**
 - The City of Stonnington has a large and visible LGBTIQ+ community with a unique and vibrant history; the broader community is diverse, welcoming, inclusive and celebrates difference
- Vibrant venues and supportive businesses**
 - Although impacted demographic and cultural shifts, the City of Stonnington retains a vibrant LGBTIQ+ venue, pub and club culture, and LGBTIQ+ owned and supportive businesses - particularly in the Chapel Street and Commercial Road precincts
- A safe community**
 - While public safety and amenity issues were also frequently raised as a challenge for the City of Stonnington (especially post-COVID, and night-time economy / visitor-related), the resident community was identified by many as feeling safe
- Locally accessible services and community groups**
 - Council and community delivered services and programs were identified as a key community strength and asset, including Council funding to local groups and sport clubs, existence of services delivered by Thorne Harbour Health, Prahran Market Clinic, Positive Living Centre, youth services and others
- Local arts, music and festivals**
 - Council programming and by other organisations was seen as inclusive of LGBTIQ+ communities, with Jazz in the Park, Chapel off Chapel, engagement with Midsumma / Melbourne Queer Film Festival identified as exemplars



Current gaps, barriers and limitations

Focus group participants were invited to identify current gaps, barriers and limitations impacting the health, wellbeing and social and economic inclusion of LGBTIQ+ people, families and communities in Stonnington. Commonly identified **issues** included:

Many LGBTIQ+ people remain disconnected, isolated and invisible

Discrimination and violence against LGBTIQ+ people persists

Services, groups, networks and information are hard to find or don't exist locally

Services and systems are often hetero- and cis-normative

Physical spaces and infrastructure can feel unsafe or unwelcoming

COVID19 has impacted LGBTIQ+ people and community amenity

Council's leadership role and commitment are not currently clear

LGBTIQ+ people on the margins are disproportionately impacted

When asked about the least positive things about Stonnington for LGBTIQ+ people, the most commonly identified **challenges** included:

Lack of LGBTIQ+ inclusive services especially health, mental health, family, housing, aged and disability

Lack of alcohol-free safe spaces, events and facilities

Eroding / changing sense of community visibility and representation

Community homo-bi-trans-phobia and safety

Politicization of LGBTIQ+ issues and lives, lack of community awareness and understanding

Inconsistent Council visibility, advocacy, promotion and media

Needs of specific groups

Many participants recognised that the issues identified above are not experienced by LGBTIQ+ people, families and communities equally, and that an **intersectional lens** is important for understanding the diversity of LGBTIQ+ experience and need in a range of settings. Groups identified as being at particular risk of exclusion in Stonnington included:

- ✓ Younger LGBTIQ+ people
- ✓ Older LGBTIQ+ people
- ✓ LGBTIQ+ people from CALD backgrounds, especially refugees and recent migrants
- ✓ Transgender, gender diverse and non-binary people
- ✓ LGBTIQ+ people with a disability, mental health and alcohol and other drug issues
- ✓ LGBTIQ+ people experiencing poverty and/or homelessness

Definition: Intersectionality

Many people within LGBTIQ+ communities live with other forms of inequality or discrimination. How these overlapping and interconnecting forms of oppression link to other aspects of identity is often called 'intersectionality'.

Many LGBTIQ+ people also experience forms of prejudice like racism, ableism and classism. This is on top of and combined with prejudice based on their gender, sexuality or sex characteristics.

Recognising intersectionality is vital to ensuring LGBTIQ+ communities can celebrate diversity and contributes to improving all LGBTIQ+ lives.

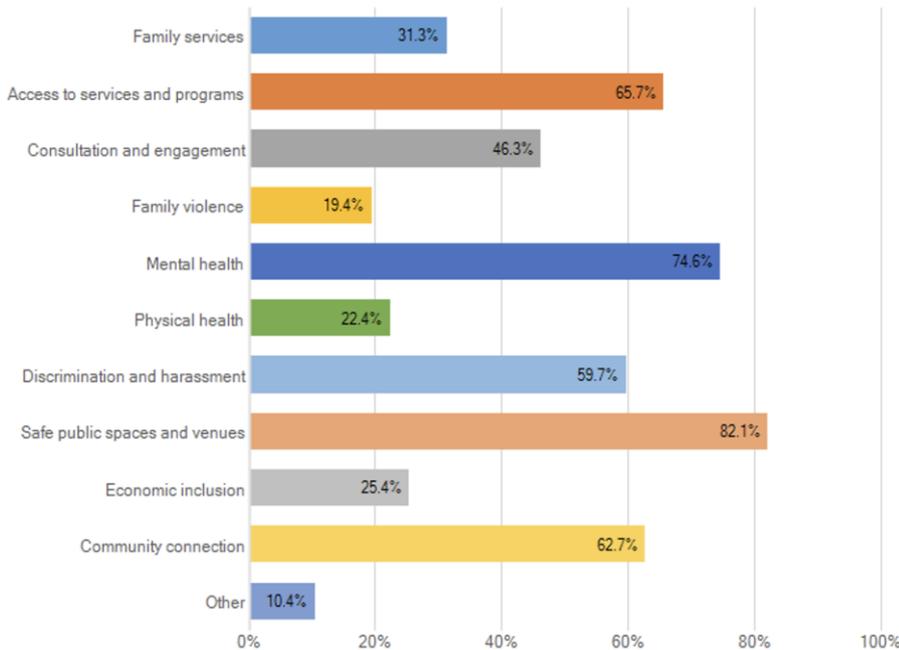
(Source: Adapted from Pride in our future: Victoria's LGBTIQ+ strategy 2022-32)



Council role and future opportunities

Participants were invited to consider the range of local government roles and functions, and to identify specific areas in which Stonnington Council might take future action through a LGBTIQ+ Action Plan.

Survey respondents were invited to select up to five listed options they thought Council could use to positively influence LGBTIQ+ safety, participation and inclusion, and health and wellbeing in Stonnington:



Future opportunities for action identified by focus group and survey participants included the following, which will inform the development of initiatives in the City of Stonnington LGBTIQ+ Action Plan:

Council commitment, leadership and accountability	Council staffing and resources	Internal and community training, education and advocacy	Communication, language and information
Accessibility of Council facilities and programs, quality accreditation	Community safety and amenity	Support for community programming and events	Community voice, representation; role of peers and allies
Partnerships with local business, clubs, organisations, institutions	Intersectional, cross-cultural and inter-generational lens	Recognition through symbols and celebrations	