

DRAFT

LGBTIQA+ Action Plan 2022-25

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Acknowledgement of Traditional Custodians

We acknowledge that we are on the Traditional Lands of the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung and Bunurong peoples of the East Kulin Nations and pay our respect to their Elders past, present and emerging.

We extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. We acknowledge their living connection to Country, relationship with the land and all living things extending back tens of thousands of years.

Purpose

The City of Stonnington has a proud history and strong commitment to inclusion, equality, and pride in the diversity of LGBTIQ+ people, families, and communities. We want to create an environment where LGBTIQ+ people feel welcome and able to fully engage in their local community and enjoy safe, healthy, and happy lives.

The LGBTIQ+ Action Plan 2022-2025 identifies our focus over the next three years for improving social and economic inclusion, and reducing barriers to participation, for LGBTIQ+ in our city. The Action Plan, and related activities, strive to raise the profile of the LGBTIQ+ community and promote opportunities for community engagement, support, and advocacy to achieve true inclusion.

The development of this Action Plan has been based on research and consultation and key guidance documents including *Pride in our future: Victoria's LGBTIQ+ strategy 2022-32* and the *Victorian Government Rainbow Ready Roadmap*.

Throughout this document, we use the term **LGBTIQ+** which stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and gender diverse, intersex, queer and questioning, asexual, and any other experiences of gender, sexuality and physiological sex characteristics a person identifies with.

We use this term with recognition and respect to the diversity within this group and the overlap but also differences in experience between people of different sexual orientations, gender identities and people with variations in sex characteristics. Further definitions of terms can be found in the *Victorian LGBTIQ+ inclusive language guide* available [online](#).

Stonnington's LGBTIQ+ community

In February 2021, Council unanimously passed a Notice of Motion to establish a LGBTIQ+ Advisory Committee and develop a LGBTIQ+ Action Plan.

Stonnington is understood to have one of the largest LGBTIQ+ communities in Victoria, including supporters and allies who help progress equality and fairness for all. Many of the community services, groups and organisations that support and service LGBTIQ+ people, families, and communities are also located within or close to Stonnington.

However, LGBTIQ+ people, families and communities often remain relatively hidden within mainstream community settings and, as is the case throughout Victoria and across Australia, there is little data about the demographic profile of LGBTIQ+ communities in Stonnington.

Generally, it is accepted that people of diverse sexual orientations, sex characteristics, and gender identity account for around 11% of the population, while in 2020 the ABS estimated that 8.4 percent of the population identify as non-heterosexual. This means that up to 13,000 or more LGBTIQ+ people may be residing in Stonnington.

As well as an Advisory Committee, Council has an internally focused Pride Network and has supported numerous community groups and programs. This includes support through community grants program and significant community contributions through support for the Victorian Pride Centre; arts and culture programming through venues such as Chapel off Chapel and participation in annual events such as Pride March. Council also acknowledges key dates in the LGBTIQ+ community calendar each year.

Strategic alignment

The LGBTIQA+ Action Plan is a subsidiary of the **Health & Wellbeing Plan 2021-25**. The priorities of this Plan also align with the strategic directions, objectives and priorities of **Future Stonnington** (incorporating the **Community Vision 2040** and **Council Plan 2021-25**).

Community Vision 2040

'Our community is a safe, inclusive and creative city that celebrates and embraces its vibrancy of cultures. Walking the tree lined streets, we pay respect to the influence of the Nation's First Peoples, past and living, on a modern, sustainable and interconnected way of life that supports the good health and wellbeing of all. Welcome to Stonnington 2040.'



Council Plan 2021-25

DIRECTION 1

A thriving and unique place

DIRECTION 2

Inclusive and healthy community

- 2.1 Health and wellbeing
- 2.2 Diverse, inclusive and safe

DIRECTION 3

A people-centred and future ready city

- 3.1 Community focus, connection and engagement
- 3.2 Enhanced customer experience
- 3.3 Engaged and capable people



Health and Wellbeing Plan 2021-25

PRIORITY 1

Healthy and well

- › Our community is more physically active
- › Our community has a healthier diet
- › Services, supports and information are easier to access in our community
- › Our community is healthy in a changing climate

PRIORITY 2

Respectful and safe

- › Equity and respect are thriving in our community
- › Our community is a safer place for everyone
- › Harm from alcohol, gambling, tobacco, and other drugs is reduced in our community

PRIORITY 3

Connected and supportive

- › Mental wellbeing is strengthened in our community
- › Our community is more socially connected and able to participate in community life
- › All members of our community are valued, supported, and connected



LGBTIQA+ Action Plan 2022-25

Guiding Principles:

- **Diversity** is made up of demographic identities including race, class, gender, sexuality, disability, nationality, religion, language, etc.
- **Intersectionality** acknowledges identities are interwoven and impact each other
- **Equity** Ensuring fair access to education, health, and social institutions, acknowledging access for some will be harder than for others.

Health and wellbeing needs of LGBTIQ+ communities

LGBTIQ+ demographic and health statistics tend to be problematic as they don't account for variations within LGBTIQ+ communities and are likely to skew results towards those with confidence to disclose their personal circumstances.

However, the participation, health and wellbeing needs and experiences of LGBTIQ+ people, families and communities have been well documented through many years of research.

While research shows most LGBTIQ+ Australians live well and are happy, they also report lower levels of subjective wellbeing and resilience than other Victorians, including:

- › higher than average rates of violence, harassment and discrimination
- › poorer mental health, in the form of anxiety, depression, psychological distress, and risk of self-harm and suicide
- › higher rates of isolation and rejection, reduced social participation and engagement
- › poorer life outcomes in terms of drug and alcohol use, homelessness, and early school leaving
- › avoidance or delay in help seeking behaviours because of real or feared prejudice within service settings.

Across social capital measures, LGBTIQ+ adults were **more likely** to never or not often feel valued by society, but were also more likely to be members of community groups, feel multiculturalism made life in their area better, and be in contact with 1-4 people in the previous day. Trans and gender diverse adults also had a significantly higher prevalence of food insecurity, psychological distress and diagnoses of anxiety or depression.

Not all LGBTIQ+ people experience the range of issues outlined above equally, with some people being more vulnerable than others due to poorer health and wellbeing experiences and outcomes.

As with all communities, compounding factors influence LGBTIQ+ health and wellbeing, such as age, gender, cultural background and English literacy, financial circumstance, existence of a disability or coexisting mental health issue, and the presence or absence of supportive and accepting relationships.

The Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System found LGBTIQ+ people experienced a range of poorer mental health outcomes, including higher risk of mental illness, self-harm and suicide compared to heterosexual and cisgender populations. LGBTIQ+ people were recognised as being among a range of groups facing additional barriers that compound their experience, including for example discrimination and poorer access to services and supports responsive to their needs.¹

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the issues faced by LGBTIQ+ communities. Services working with LGBTIQ+ people are now reporting increases in clients experiencing psychological distress and suicidal behaviours and thoughts, those raising concerns around safety at home, job loss, food security and potential interactions with police enforcing restrictions. There has also been decreased access to medical affirmation for trans and gender diverse people. Recent research has also highlighted the unique and disproportionate impacts of COVID19 on LGBTIQ+ people, families and communities. The impacts of COVID19 were widely reported as disproportionately impacting (for example) young people, women, culturally diverse communities, and people in low paid and precarious employments.

¹ Royal Commission in Victoria's Mental Health System (2021). [Final report](#) (Accessed 25/5/22)

Expectations of local government

A community survey undertaken by the Victorian Local Governance Association and Victorian Gay and Lesbian Rights Lobby in 2016 outlined a range of expectations that LGBTIQ+ communities have of local councils. These included that councils advocate for and publicly support LGBTIQ+ residents, provide inclusive health and community services, and consult community members on the issues that affect them.²

In 2020, the Victorian Pride Lobby proposed local government election priorities which included Rainbow Tick accreditation of council-run services; establishment of LGBTIQ+ advisory committees; development of LGBTIQ+ action plans; recognition of days of significance for LGBTIQ+ communities, including by flying appropriate flags from council buildings; and participation in LGBTIQ+ arts and cultural events such as Midsumma, Pride and Carnival.³

These priorities provide a platform for local government engagement and action, in response to the needs of LGBTIQ+ communities.

VicHealth found that LGBTIQ+ Victorians who feel connected to their community report higher resilience, subjective wellbeing and life satisfaction, but that major disparities remain. Only 6 in 10 regional LGB Victorians agree that ‘people around here can be trusted’ compared to 8 in 10 regional heterosexual Victorians; only two thirds of LGBTIQ+ Victorians agree ‘people around here are willing to help their neighbours’ compared to three quarters of non-LGBTIQ+ Victorians.⁴

In May 2022, the Victorian State Government released a suite of resources, the *Rainbow ready roadmap*, which included specific guidance for local government.⁵ The resources provide a range of tools and guides to assist local councils become more LGBTIQ+ inclusive and deliver on their commitment to drive LGBTIQ+ inclusion through Victoria’s whole-of-government LGBTIQ+ strategy.

The roadmap includes a range of indicators across four key principles of LGBTIQ+ inclusion – understanding, inclusion, visibility and safety all of which are included in the Stonnington LGBTIQ+ Action Plan.

² VLGA (2020). [Rainbow resource for Victorian councils: Supporting lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer diversity and inclusion in local government](#), p. 8 (Accessed 25/5/22)

³ Victorian Pride Lobby (2020). [Rainbow local government: LGBTIQ+ priorities for the 2020 Victorian local council elections](#). (Accessed 25/5/22)

⁴ VicHealth (2017). [VicHealth indicators survey 2015: Supplementary report, sexuality](#). (Accessed 25/5/22)

⁵ State of Victoria (2022). [Rainbow ready roadmap: Setting guide for local government](#). (Accessed 25/5/22)

Engagement summary

To guide the development of this Action Plan, we engaged with 132 community members, businesses, and community groups through hosting 4 interviews and 11 focus groups; attending one Allyship event and running an online survey. We also spoke with Council's LGBTIQA+ Advisory Committee, and Council staff to understand the current and emerging needs, the changing issues, expectations, and priorities within our community.

Consultation sought participants' views and experiences of living or working in, or visiting, the City of Stonnington, including:

- › current community strengths and assets that contribute to a supportive environment for LGBTIQA+ people and families in Stonnington
- › challenges faced, including those arising from or compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic
- › awareness and opinions of Council and non-Council services and programs, and any service gaps
- › views of Council's role in supporting LGBTIQA+ communities
- › different needs within a community group, acknowledging the intersection of age, cultural background and many other aspects of a person's individual identity and circumstance
- › information needs and communication preferences
- › partnerships and collaboration opportunities
- › Council's priorities and the initiatives planned by other work areas.

Consultation participants demonstrated a great deal of pride in their local community and the strength and resilience of LGBTIQA+ communities. They welcomed the efforts of Council and other local organisations and businesses to help foster a safe, inclusive, and vibrant community for all people in Stonnington.

The following themes emerged from the consultations

01

Stonnington has a **large and visible** LGBTIQA+ community with a unique and vibrant history and generally, the community is **diverse, welcoming, inclusive and celebrates difference**. There are many **LGBTIQA+ owned and supportive venues, groups and businesses** and **Council programming is seen as inclusive**.

02

Issues of **community safety** and **amenity**, particularly in entertainment precincts, are a challenge. Notwithstanding the local community strengths, **discrimination and violence** against LGBTIQA+ people persist. There is a need for more **safe and welcoming** physical spaces and social infrastructure.

03

Services, groups, networks, and information **specifically targeted** to the needs of LGBTIQA+ people and families are often **hard to find or don't exist locally**. **Universal services** intended for the whole community are **often hetero- and cis-normative** and fail to recognise or are insensitive towards the needs and experiences of LGBTIQA+ people.

04

Council has a **leadership role and commitment** to supporting and acknowledging LGBTIQA+ people, families and communities however, it is **not well promoted, clearly understood, or universally applied**. **Consistent and embedded leadership and advocacy** on issues of importance to LGBTIQA+ people is critically important, including in response to the continuing politicisation of LGBTIQA+ lives in public discourse.

Action		Timeframe Year 1 / 2 / 3 Ongoing	Funding New / Existing / External	Delivery
Healthy and well				
1.1	Deliver support to Rainbow families by sourcing and providing LGBTIQA+ inclusive resources to Council's Maternal and Child Health, playgroups, childcare, and library services to implement and/or distribute. For example, newspaper subscriptions, library book collections.	Year 1	Existing <i>Costs will vary depending on resources; noting there are online resources available free of charge</i>	Community Services
1.2	Partner with local services to advocate for LGBTIQA+ needs and inclusion, focusing on, but not exclusive to: a. Primary health for example mental health services b. Supports for LGBTIQA+ carers and people with intersectional issues such as disability and all age cohorts c. Inclusive family violence prevention and responses.	Ongoing	Existing <i>Within existing staff resources</i>	Aged, Diversity & Community Planning
1.3	Work with local mainstream and LGBTIQA+ sporting clubs to increase participation and inclusion by LGBTIQA+ people and families, especially younger people and Transgender/Non-Binary/Gender Diverse people	Ongoing	Existing <i>Within existing staff resources</i>	Active Communities
1.4	Partner with local communities and leading organisations (education, sport, arts, health, community, business) to develop and share best practice resources for LGBTIQA+ inclusion.	Ongoing	Existing <i>Within existing staff resources</i>	Community and Wellbeing
1.5	Develop a dedicated page on Council's website for LGBTIQA+ information, resources, events etc	Year 1	Existing <i>Within existing staff resources</i>	Community Planning Communications & Engagement
1.6	Work with Headspace to support the creation of community Pride Groups for young people.	Ongoing	Externally funded	Middle Years and Youth Service

Action		Timeframe Year 1 / 2 / 3 Ongoing	Funding New / Existing / External	Delivery
1.7	Enhance accessible and inclusive engagement practice across the organisation and ensure all publications and marketing use inclusive language and images	Year 1	Existing <i>Within existing staff resources</i>	Communications & Engagement Events, Arts & Culture
1.8	Promote available grants (Council and others) to assist local LGBTIQ+ groups, clubs and organisations deliver community-led programs and events	Ongoing	Existing <i>Paid social media posts (\$500)</i>	Aged, Diversity & Community Planning
1.9	Update Councils community engagement data collection processes and forms to ensure they are LGBTIQ+ inclusive	Year 1	Existing <i>Within existing staff resources (\$3,000)</i>	Communications & Engagement
1.10	Pilot the use of self-assessments across Council services from the State Governments Community Health Pride resource, for inclusive monitoring and evaluation purposes.	Ongoing	Existing <i>Within existing staff resources</i>	Community & Wellbeing Division
Connected and supportive				
2.1	Promote LGBTIQ+ inclusive business resources via Council's channels.	Ongoing	Existing <i>Paid social media posts (\$500)</i>	Economic Place & Development
2.2	Consider inclusion of accessible and gender-neutral toilets, changerooms, parenting rooms and other facilities in all new and redeveloped Council infrastructure	Ongoing	New <i>Costs to be included in relevant capital projects</i>	Environment & Infrastructure Division
2.3	Partner with local businesses and organisations, and LGBTIQ+ organisations outside of Stonnington, to grow the range of activity, program, and event opportunities available in the municipality eg. Queer Film Festival	Ongoing	Existing <i>Costs will vary depending on activity, program, or event.</i>	Events, Arts & Culture Economic & Place Development

Action		Timeframe Year 1 / 2 / 3 Ongoing	Funding New / Existing / External	Delivery
2.4	Explore options to celebrate Stonnington's unique LGBTIQ+ history and experience. For example, public art installations; and / or documenting local queer history.	Ongoing	New <i>Costs will vary depending on scope of project.</i>	Events, Arts & Culture Economic & Place Development
2.5	Continue to support and enable LGBTIQ+ communities to identify and advocate for their needs, through the Stonnington LGBTIQ+ Community Advisory Committee, other Council advisory structures and ongoing feedback mechanisms.	Ongoing	Existing <i>Within existing staff resources</i>	Aged, Diversity and Community Planning
2.6	Continue Council visibility and participation at Midsumma Festival including Pride March	Ongoing	Existing <i>Within existing staff resources</i>	People & Culture Active Communities
2.7	Promote activities and fly the appropriate flag from Council buildings on LGBTIQ+ awareness days on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual 'International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia, Intersexphobia and Transphobia (IDAHOBIT)' • Annual 'Wear It Purple Day' • Melbourne's annual Pride March • For the duration of the annual Midsumma Festival • Transgender flag on the annual Transgender Visibility Day • Transgender flag on the annual Transgender Day of Remembrance 	Ongoing	Existing <i>Within existing staff resources (\$3,500)</i>	Active Communities
2.8	Continue to facilitate the Pride Network to support LGBTIQ+ identified staff and their allies.	Ongoing	Existing <i>Within existing staff resources</i>	Pride Network Facilitator
2.9	Consider opportunities to create a locally accessible, safe community hub where LGBTIQ+ people, families and community can connect within existing major site redevelopments	Ongoing	New <i>Costs to be considered as part of project scope, where applicable</i>	Community Infrastructure Plan

Action		Timeframe Year 1 / 2 / 3 Ongoing	Funding New / Existing / External	Delivery
2.10	<p>Include low-or-no-cost Council events and programming that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> actively promote an inclusive environment for all people regardless of gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, faith, age, ability, or income. foster opportunities for LGBTIQ+ people to connect, including intergenerationally, to reduce social isolation and loneliness. 	Ongoing	<p>Existing</p> <p><i>Within existing staff resources (\$10,000 - \$20,000)</i></p> <p><i>New activities to be costed based on project scope</i></p>	Community and Wellbeing
Respectful and safe				
3.1	<p>Engage with young people to create safe and inclusive LGBTIQ+ celebration events and activities.</p> <p>For example, Expressions Committee Events such as Inclusive Practice, Queer Stories and Queer Prom</p>	Ongoing	<p>Existing</p> <p><i>Within existing staff resources</i></p>	Middle Years and Youth Service
3.2	<p>Ensure LGBTIQ+ experiences of violence and discrimination in the community are included in the development of Council's community safety initiatives and design of safer public spaces and capital works.</p>	Ongoing	<p>Existing</p> <p><i>Within existing staff resources</i></p>	<p>Aged, Diversity & Community Planning</p> <p>Environment & Infrastructure Division</p>
3.3	<p>Support LGBTIQ+ young people through case management and group programs to increase safety in seeking community support at the important developmental stage of adolescence.</p>	Year 1	<p>Existing</p> <p><i>Within existing staff resources</i></p>	Middle Years and Youth Service
3.4	<p>Consider a statement of commitment to LGBTIQ+ communities for Council endorsement.</p>	Year 2	<p>Existing</p> <p><i>Within existing staff resources</i></p>	Aged Diversity & Community Planning
3.5	<p>Consider the Darlington Statement of intersex organisations and advocates for Council endorsement</p>	Year 2	<p>Existing</p> <p><i>Within existing staff resources</i></p>	Aged, Diversity & Community Planning

Action		Timeframe Year 1 / 2 / 3 Ongoing	Funding New / Existing / External	Delivery
3.6	Develop a Council-wide inclusive language guide that covers terminology and other communication protocols in keeping with emerging LGBTIQ+ community practice	Year 2	Existing <i>Within existing staff resources</i>	Aged, Diversity & Community Planning Communications & Engagement
3.7	Deliver LGBTIQ+ inclusion training including language and unconscious bias, for all staff every two years including Councillor's, Executive and include induction training for onboarding of new staff and Councillors.	Year 2	New <i>Online / in person training (\$30,000)</i>	People and Culture; Governance
3.8	Increase LGBTIQ+ visibility and Council's support for LGBTIQ+ people, families and communities through increased use of flags on Council buildings, other rainbow collateral (stickers, posters, etc), email signatures, communications content and other rainbow assets across the municipality	Ongoing	New <i>Costs will vary depending on collateral chosen</i>	Executive Team; Communications & Engagement Active Communities People and Culture Economic Place & Development

Monitoring and evaluation

The LGBTIQ+ Advisory Committee will guide and provide input into the implementation of the LGBTIQ+ Action Plan 2022-25. This will include seeking the advice and guidance of the Committee in relation to actions included in this Action Plan as well as other initiatives that are not included but may impact or potentially impact LGBTIQ+ people.

An annual review will be undertaken to reflect on progress and identify any new opportunities or emerging needs. A progress report will be shared with the Council.