

LGBTIQA+ Action Plan 2023-26

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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 2023-2026 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

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.

City of Stonnington

In February 2021, Council articulated its commitment to the LGBTIQ+ community by unanimously passing a Notice of Motion to establish a LGBTIQ+ Advisory Committee and develop a LGBTIQ+ Action Plan.

As a provider of community services, programs and infrastructure Council invests in social research, community engagement and needs analysis to understand lived experience, needs and interests of the local community to ensure these are inclusive, responsive, and appropriate. Understanding community diversity, intersectionality and needs of groups who experience marginalisation is fundamental to this work.

The Gender Equality Act (2020) acknowledges that gender inequality may be compounded by other forms of disadvantage or discrimination due to other characteristics including sexual orientation and gender identity; and requires Council to take positive action towards

achieving workplace gender equality and to consider gender equality in all our policies, programs, and services.

The Act requires Council, and all staff, to promote gender equality in the work they do and to undertake Gender Impact Assessments on all new infrastructure projects, strategic plans, policies, programs, and services to ensure they meet the different needs of women, men, and gender diverse people. To help meet these obligations Council will:

- Review the Local Law and Council policies to ensure there are no unintended consequences or discrimination of LGBTIQ+ people
- Continue to deliver community events that are inclusive of all people regardless of gender, sexual orientation, Aboriginality, ethnicity, faith, age, ability, or income
- Consider the lived experiences of LGBTIQ+ people in the development of Council plans, policies, and strategies.

Council is a proud sector leader in delivering inclusive and responsive aged care services and participated in the 2012 pilot of the Rainbow Tick audit and accreditation process.

Council established its LGBTIQ+ Advisory Committee in September 2021 and has a proud history of supporting community groups and programs, including:

- Annual community grants program to assist local LGBTIQ+ groups, clubs and organisations deliver community led programs and events
- Support provided in the development of the Victorian Pride Centre
- Arts and culture programming through venues such as Chapel off Chapel
- Participation in annual events such as Midsumma Festival including Pride March
- Promoting activities and flying the appropriate flag on Council buildings on the following days, as endorsed by Council:
 - 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
- Participating in external Pride networks and communities of practice
- Dedicated LGBTIQ+ community page on Council's website
- Maintaining Rainbow Tick accreditation for Council's Aged Services

As an employer, Council has a large and diverse workforce and is strongly committed to inclusion understanding it is critical to retaining the best talent and delivering a contemporary, relevant community service. To this end, Council facilitates Pride Network to support LGBTIQ+ identified staff and their allies; offers all staff an opportunity to sign the Stonnington Pride Pledge; continuously monitors, reviews, and improves workplace practices and policies; and is developing resources and guidelines to support and build staff confidence.

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 that identities are interwoven, impact each other and can create distinct experiences of discrimination or disadvantage

- **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

There is a need for more robust LGBTIQ+ population-level demographic and health data that accounts for variation within LGBTIQ+ communities and acknowledges that survey results can be skewed by confidence to participate in and disclose personal circumstances.¹ However, the participation, health and wellbeing needs and experiences of LGBTIQ+ people, families and communities have been well documented through many years of research.

The experiences of LGBTIQ+ people vary and are unique to each individual, family and community. Whilst experiences differ from person to person, research demonstrates that LGBTIQ+ people report lower levels of wellbeing:

- › 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.²

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.³ Trans and gender diverse adults also had a significantly higher prevalence of food insecurity, psychological distress and diagnoses of anxiety or depression.⁴

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, disability, mental ill health, and the presence or absence of supportive and accepting relationships.⁵

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.⁶

The COVID-19 pandemic and related restrictions exacerbated the issues faced by LGBTIQ+ communities. Services working with LGBTIQ+ people reported increases in

¹ Rainbow Health Victoria (2020). *Research Matters: How many people are LGBTIQ?* (Accessed 10/1/23)

² VLGA (2020). *Rainbow resource for Victorian councils: Supporting lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer diversity and inclusion in local government* (Accessed 6/1/22)

³ *ibid.*

⁴ *ibid.*

⁵ Victoria State Government (2020). *Discussion paper for the Victorian LGBTIQ Strategy*. (Accessed 6/1/22)

⁶ Royal Commission in Victoria's Mental Health System (2021). *Final report* (Accessed 25/5/22)

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 was also decreased access to medical affirmation for trans and gender diverse people.

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.⁷

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.⁸

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.⁹

In May 2022, the Victorian State Government released a suite of resources, the *Rainbow ready roadmap*, which included specific guidance for local government.¹⁰ 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.

⁷ 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)

⁸ Victorian Pride Lobby (2020). [Rainbow local government: LGBTIQ+ priorities for the 2020 Victorian local council elections](#). (Accessed 25/5/22)

⁹ VicHealth (2017). [VicHealth indicators survey 2015: Supplementary report, sexuality](#). (Accessed 25/5/22)

¹⁰ 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 four interviews and 11 focus groups; attending one Allyship event and running an online survey. We also spoke with Council's LGBTIQ+ 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 LGBTIQ+ 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 LGBTIQ+ 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 LGBTIQ+ 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** LGBTIQ+ community with a unique and vibrant history and generally, the community is **diverse, welcoming, inclusive and celebrates difference**. There are many **LGBTIQ+ 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 LGBTIQ+ 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 LGBTIQ+ 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 LGBTIQ+ people.

04

Council has a **leadership role and commitment** to supporting and acknowledging LGBTIQ+ 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 LGBTIQ+ people is critically important, including in response to the continuing politicisation of LGBTIQ+ lives in public discourse.

| Action | Timeframe | Funding | Delivery | |
|-------------------------|--|---------|--|--------------------------------------|
| Healthy and well | | | | |
| 1.1 | Deliver support to Rainbow families by sourcing and providing LGBTIQ+ inclusive resources to Council's Maternal ¹¹ and Child Health, playgroups, childcare, and library services to implement and/or distribute. For example, newspaper subscriptions, library book collections. | Year 1 | \$ <i>Costs will vary depending on resources; noting there are online resources available free of charge</i> | Community Services |
| 1.2 | Advocate for the State Government to rename the Maternal and Child Health Service so that it is inclusive of all parents and carers. | Ongoing | \$ <i>Within existing staff resources</i> | Community Services |
| 1.3 | Partner with local services to advocate for LGBTIQ+ needs and inclusion, focusing on, but not exclusive to: a. Primary health for example mental health services b. Supports for LGBTIQ+ carers and people with intersectional experiences, such as disability and all age cohorts c. Inclusive family violence prevention and responses. | Ongoing | \$ <i>Within existing staff resources</i> | Aged, Diversity & Community Planning |
| 1.4 | Improve the experience and participation of LGBTIQ+ people in sport by promoting Proud to Play resources and training opportunities to sporting clubs and by installing inclusive change facilities during capital works projects and upgrades. | Ongoing | \$\$\$ <i>New</i> | Active Communities |
| 1.5 | Partner with local communities and leading organisations (education, disability, multicultural, Aboriginal, sport, arts, health, community, business) to develop and share best practice resources for LGBTIQ+ inclusion. | Ongoing | \$ <i>Within existing staff resources</i> | Community and Wellbeing |

¹¹ City of Stonnington acknowledges the term 'maternal' can create barriers for some members of the LGBTIQ+ community to accessing important support. We will endeavour to advocate for our community's needs to the Victorian Department of Health.

| Action | | Timeframe | Funding | Delivery |
|---------------------------------|---|---------------------------|---|---|
| | | Year 1 / 2 / 3 Ongoing | \$ Low \$0-\$50k \$\$ Medium \$50k-\$250k \$\$\$ High \$250k+ | |
| 1.6 | Work with Headspace to support the creation of community Pride Groups for young people. | Ongoing | \$\$-\$ <i>Externally funded</i> | Middle Years and Youth Service |
| 1.7 | Enhance accessible and inclusive engagement practice across the organisation and ensure all publications and marketing use inclusive language and images | Year 1 | \$ <i>Within existing staff resources</i> | Communications & Engagement Events, Arts & Culture |
| 1.8 | Update Council's community engagement data collection processes and forms to include all genders to support inclusivity, participation and awareness. | Year 1 | \$ <i>Within existing staff resources (\$3,000)</i> | Communications & Engagement |
| 1.9 | Advocate for the Federal Government to include questions on sexual orientation and gender identity in the next Census to access data to better inform Council services and programs. | Year 1 | \$ <i>Within existing staff resources</i> | Communications & Engagement |
| 1.10 | Pilot the use of self-assessments across Council's community services for inclusive monitoring and evaluation purposes. | Year 2 | \$ <i>Within existing staff resources</i> | Community & Wellbeing Division |
| Connected and supportive | | | | |
| 2.1 | Promote LGBTIQ+ inclusive business resources via Council's channels. | Ongoing | \$ <i>Within existing staff resources Paid social media posts (\$500 per post)</i> | Economic Place & Development |
| 2.2 | In addition to male, female and accessible facilities, include all gender toilets, changerooms, parenting rooms and other facilities in all new Council infrastructure and in redevelopments where overlays such as space and heritage, permit. | Ongoing | \$\$\$ <i>New - Costs to be included in relevant capital projects</i> | Environment & Infrastructure Division |

| Action | | Timeframe | Funding | Delivery |
|--------|---|---------------------------|---|---|
| | | Year 1 / 2 / 3 Ongoing | \$ Low \$0-\$50k \$\$ Medium \$50k-\$250k \$\$\$ High \$250k+ | |
| 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 e.g., Queer Film Festival | Ongoing | \$\$ <i>Costs will vary depending on activity, program, or event.</i> | Events, Arts & Culture Economic & Place Development |
| 2.4 | Explore options to celebrate and preserve Stonnington's unique LGBTIQ+ history and experience. For example, public art installations; and / or documenting local queer history and place. | Ongoing | \$ <i>New - Costs will vary depending on scope of project.</i> | Events, Arts & Culture Economic & Place Development City Futures |
| 2.5 | Continue to support and enable LGBTIQ+ communities to identify and advocate for their needs to all tiers of government and their agencies, through the Stonnington LGBTIQ+ Community Advisory Committee, other Council advisory structures and ongoing feedback mechanisms. | Ongoing | \$ - <i>Within existing staff resources</i> | Aged, Diversity and Community Planning Communications and Engagement |
| 2.6 | Continue to demonstrate and foster LGBTIQ+ leadership within Council through executive team promotion of, internal and external Pride activities. For example, Stonnington Pride Network events and activities and annual Pride March. | Ongoing | \$ <i>Within existing staff resources</i> | People and Culture |
| 2.7 | Provide opportunities for LGBTIQ+ groups and individuals to access Council facilities for activities that enhance community connection and wellbeing and monitor usage to inform the need for a dedicated space. | Ongoing | \$ <i>New - Costs to be considered as part of project scope, where applicable</i> | Community Infrastructure Plan |
| 2.8 | Provide and/or promote activities for older LGBTIQ+ community members to connect with peers | Ongoing | \$ <i>Within existing staff resources</i> | Aged, Diversity and Community Planning |
| 2.9 | Engage with young people to create safe, accessible and inclusive LGBTIQ+ celebration events and activities. | Ongoing | \$ <i>Within existing staff resources</i> | Middle Years and Youth Service |

| Action | Timeframe | Funding | Delivery | |
|----------------------------|--|---|---|---|
| | Year 1 / 2 / 3 Ongoing | \$ Low \$0-\$50k \$\$ Medium \$50k-\$250k \$\$\$ High \$250k+ | | |
| 2.10 | For example, Expressions Committee Events such as Inclusive Practice, Queer Stories and Queer Prom Reference Council's Equal Opportunity Policy in Council's Supplier Code of Conduct to demonstrate Council's commitment to a 'Fair Go for all' | Year 3 | \$ <i>Within existing staff resources</i> | Procurement |
| Respectful and safe | | | | |
| 3.1 | Support LGBTIQ+ young people through case management and group programs to increase safety in seeking community support at the important developmental stage of adolescence. | Year 1 | \$ <i>Within existing staff resources</i> | Middle Years and Youth Service |
| 3.2 | Consider Council endorsement of the Darlington Statement to encourage participation of, and consultation with, intersex people on issues and policies that affect them. | Year 2 | \$ <i>Within existing staff resources</i> | Aged, Diversity & Community Planning |
| 3.3 | Incorporate LGBTIQ+ advice in a Council wide Inclusive language and Imagery Guide that supports staff in engaging with, and referring to, different groups in our community (LGBTIQ+, Disability, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, age, cultural and linguistic diversity) and supports respect in our workplace and in the delivery of policies, programs, and services. | Year 2 | \$ <i>Within existing staff resources</i> | Aged, Diversity & Community Planning Communications & Engagement People and Culture |
| 3.4 | Include LGBTIQ+ awareness in induction and onboarding of new staff and Councillors; and promote the opportunity for staff, executive and Councillors to participate in online or in person LGBTIQ+ awareness training. | Year 2 | \$\$ <i>New - Online / in person training (\$30,000)</i> | People and Culture; Governance |
| 3.5 | Increase visibility of Council's support for LGBTIQ+ people, families, and communities through rainbow collateral (stickers, posters, etc), email signatures, communications content, and images. | Ongoing | \$ <i>Costs will vary depending on collateral chosen</i> | Executive Team; Communications & Engagement Active Communities |

| Action | Timeframe Year 1 / 2 / 3 Ongoing | Funding \$ Low \$0-\$50k \$\$ Medium \$50k-\$250k \$\$\$ High \$250k+ | Delivery |
|--------|--|--|---|
| | | | 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 2023-26. 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 evaluation tool will be developed to monitor and report on the achievement of Council's existing and ongoing commitments, and new actions identified for implementation over the lifecycle of the Plan. The annual review will reflect on progress and identify any new opportunities or emerging needs. A progress report will be shared with the Council.