



TAKING BACK OUR PRIDE

A Prepare, Respond and Recover
approach to rural LGBTIQ+
events & community safety



We acknowledge the traditional owners of the lands across the area we now know as Victoria, where this LGBTIQ+ work took place.

Rural Pride Australia owes a profound debt of gratitude to the State-wide Community of Rural LGBTIQ+ Practice, affected LGBTIQ+ and allied leaders, and those that support and love them. This resource is only possible because of the trust and faith they had in sharing their experiences, reflecting on what was won and lost, as well as allowing us to support part of their response and recovery. Each lesson is hard-fought, hard-won and came at a cost to LGBTIQ+ community, often compounding lived experience of past hurts and injustices. This resource is also a testament to our resistance, resilience and enduring capacity to care for each other.

This resource is dedicated to the late Deb Chumbley, a fair, fierce and fabulous LGBTIQ+ community leader across regional and rural Victoria. She said in a Community of Practice meeting that we needed a safety resource for LGBTIQ+ events delivered by multiple stakeholders within regional and rural communities.

We understand that this can make for tough reading. Please consider the supports at the end of this resource and don't hesitate to access them.

This resource, and the State-wide Community of Rural LGBTIQ+ Practice that co-designed it, was made possible through Department for Families, Fairness and Housing LGBTIQ+ Strengthening Sector funding.

FOREWORD

FOREWARD—VICTORIAN COMMISSIONER FOR LGBTIQA+ COMMUNITIES, JOE BALL (HE/HIM)

I congratulate Rural Pride Australia on this resource for supporting LGBTIQA+ events and community safety in the regions, and everyone who has contributed to this work.

Regional Pride events and festivals are community health in action: connection, belonging and protective factors for our wellbeing and our families of choice and origin. I personally thank everyone involved in this joyful, hugely creative and meaningful community building work, for your care and persistence, including, unfortunately, sometimes in the face of opposition.

As Commissioner, I work with all LGBTIQA+ people, communities and their families across Victoria to bring their lived experiences to the government. I play a leading role in the implementation of the Pride in our Future 2022-32 strategy, the Victorian Government's 10-year plan for LGBTIQA+ equality, which involves all levels of government. I advise to ensure that policies, services and programs are safe and inclusive for everyone. I work with allies and broader communities to strengthen culturally safe and accessible support. I work with community organisations, businesses and others to make sure the needs of LGBTIQA+ Victorians are understood and met.

In a time where there's more discrimination, harassment and abuse and prejudice-motivated crimes against LGBTIQA+ and intersectional communities, this work is even more important.

We have new legislative frameworks in Victoria to support us with the commencement of criminal provisions of anti-vilification legislation in September this year, with civil provisions coming into effect in mid-2026, and new 'post-and-boast' legislation. Those spreading hate can't intimidate and menace us without profound legal consequences.

We also know how much more work there still is to do. Legislation alone won't change community attitudes and behaviours, and won't change them quickly. It's only ever part of the solution. And this is why taking a Prepare-Respond-Recover model – as outlined in this resource – is useful today in taking a considered, methodical and joined up approach to running LGBTIQA+ events and community safety.

Again, congratulations on this resource, which I hope is widely shared within regional communities.

VICTORIA'S ANTI-VILIFICATION LAWS & PREJUDICE-MOTIVATED CRIME (PMC)

Under Victoria's Racial and Religious Tolerance Act 2001, recently expanded, it is unlawful to engage in conduct that incites hatred, serious contempt, revulsion, or severe ridicule against someone on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, or sex characteristics.

The Crimes Amendment (Vilification) Act 2023 introduced new criminal offences for serious vilification. These laws strengthen protections for LGBTIQA+ communities and impose clearer obligations on organisations to act when hate conduct occurs.

Previous vilification offences in the Racial and Religious Tolerance Act 2001 were complex and difficult to prosecute. From 20 September 2025, two new serious vilification offences prohibit the most serious cases of hate speech or conduct – not merely offensive or unkind behaviour – and carry higher maximum penalties, to reflect the seriousness of this behaviour.

The new serious vilification offences in the Crimes Act 1958 are:

1. an incitement offence; and,
2. a threat offence.

Reports can be made to Victoria Police as prejudice-motivated crimes (PMC), and guidance is available through the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission (VEOHRC) and Department of Justice and Community Safety (DJCS).

USEFUL LINKS

www.vic.gov.au/new-protections-against-vilification

www.humanrights.vic.gov.au

www.police.vic.gov.au/prejudice-motivated-crime

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WHERE ARE YOU RIGHT NOW?

PREPARE

If you are:

- Planning an LGBTIQA+ event that's months away
- Wondering how best to work with LGBTIQA+ community in running an event
- Wanting to significantly increase the likelihood of your event going ahead safely

then consider turning to...[PREPARE on page 13](#)

Please note: This section might not be as helpful if you are days or weeks away from the event.

RESPOND

If you have:

- Run a recent LGBTIQA+ event that was targeted by hate, vilification and violence
- Recently had an LGBTIQA+ event that was altered, postponed or cancelled
- Wondered how best to work with LGBTIQA+ community after a recent affected event

then you might turn to...[RESPOND on page 32](#)

Please note: This section might not be as helpful if it's a few months since an event was postponed or cancelled.

RECOVER

If you have:

- Run a local LGBTIQA+ event targeted by hate, vilification and violence in the past
- Had an LGBTIQA+ event that was altered, postponed or cancelled in the past
- Wondered how best to work with LGBTIQA+ community after an affected event

then you could turn to...[RECOVER on page 50](#)

Please note: it's never too late. There's benefit in investing in collective community care, even if there have been missed opportunities.

A PREPARE, RESPOND AND RECOVER APPROACH TO RURAL LGBTIQ+ EVENTS & COMMUNITY SAFETY

IDENTIFIED CRITICAL FACTOR ¹	PREPARE	RESPOND	RECOVER
Whole-of-Community Stakeholder Collaboration	Gather all stakeholders to understand their role in local LGBTIQ+ events and community safety; Develop an LGBTIQ+-endorsed <i>Safe & Proud LGBTIQ+ Event Plan</i>; and, Demonstrate allyship to the LGBTIQ+ community that is informed by local LGBTIQ+ community.	Gather all stakeholders ASAP to fully understand their essential role in responding to anti-LGBTIQ+ hate, vilification and violence whilst keeping local LGBTIQ+ community safe.	Gather all stakeholders to reaffirm ongoing allyship to the local LGBTIQ+ community, and plan an ongoing, collaborative recovery effort for LGBTIQ+ community, whilst centring local LGBTIQ+ community.
True Partnership with Local LGBTIQ+ Community	Take an LGBTIQ+-led and LGBTIQ+-first approach to planning safe and proud LGBTIQ+ events.	Take an LGBTIQ+-led and LGBTIQ+-first approach to response efforts to pre-event and event anti-LGBTIQ+ hate, vilification and violence.	Learning from and applying emerging LGBTIQ+ Individual Recovery Lessons.
Take an LGBTIQ+-First & Led Approach to Risk & Safety	Take an LGBTIQ+-led and LGBTIQ+-first approach to risk and safety planning for LGBTIQ+ events.	Take an LGBTIQ+-led and LGBTIQ+-first approach to risk and safety in response efforts.	
Role Clarity in Preparation, Response & Recovery	Develop an <i>Anti-LGBTIQ+ Hate, Vilification and Violence Response and Recovery Plan</i>; and, Develop an accompanying operational plan that outlines roles, resources and support.	All critical stakeholders follow the <i>Anti-LGBTIQ+ Hate, Vilification and Violence Response and Recovery Plan</i> .	All critical stakeholders follow the Anti-LGBTIQ+ Hate, Vilification and Violence Response and Recovery Plan.
Deliberate & Generous Community Communication & Engagement	Develop a <i>Safe LGBTIQ+ Event Promotional Plan</i>; Develop an <i>LGBTIQ+ Event (Response and Recovery) Communications Plan</i>; and, Partner for a Localised, Tailored Approach.	All critical stakeholders follow the <i>LGBTIQ+ Event (Response and Recovery) Communications Plan</i> .	

¹Note: For every Identified Risk Factor, regional and rural LGBTIQ+ Victorians have told us the risk to the event and community increases significantly. Whilst one or more Identified Risk Factors does not mean guaranteed anti-LGBTIQ+ hate, vilification and violence, the likelihood significantly increases.

OVERVIEW: A PREPARE, RESPOND & RECOVER APPROACH

In response to a rise in anti-LGBTIQA+ hate, vilification and violence throughout 2023 and 2024, and an inadequate state-wide response to supporting affected regional and rural communities, LGBTIQA+ leaders from regional and rural communities called for a safety resource focused on LGBTIQA+ events delivered by multiple stakeholders within regional and rural communities.

In a 2024 survey, Rural Pride Australia found that due to community safety concerns: 50% of respondents had an LGBTIQA+ event or gathering delayed, postponed or cancelled in their community; 75% of respondents had an LGBTIQA+ event or gathering changed or altered in their community; 62.5% of respondents hadn't planned or considered LGBTIQA+ events or gatherings in their community; and, 100% of respondents reported that online anti-LGBTIQA+ hate and vilification impacted their regional and rural LGBTIQA+ events and gatherings.

This project is all about keeping regional and rural pride events happening within a supportive, local and LGBTIQA+-first ecosystem, and ensuring regional and rural LGBTIQA+ leaders and communities are visible, safe and connected. We maintain our position that postponements and cancellations must be a last resort that can only be made in close consultation with key local LGBTIQA+ community leaders.

WHAT THIS RESOURCE IS

- A summary of what regional and rural Victorian LGBTIQA+ leaders, community members and their supporters have told us about the last few years of LGBTIQA+ visibility and pride, and the impact of anti-LGBTIQA+ hate, vilification and violence;
- An “in the meantime” practical guide, with some of the best answers to some of the most common pain points in doing non-metropolitan pride safely; and,
- A plan to keep regional and rural LGBTIQA+ events happening and LGBTIQA+ community safe, designed to complement local plans, processes and partnerships.

WHO THIS IS RESOURCE FOR

- LGBTIQA+ leaders, community members and our most active allies who organise events, festivals and gatherings for their communities;
- Mainstream practitioners, services and organisations that have run LGBTIQA+ events, or have attempted to, and want to understand what has gone wrong, the pivotal role they can ideally play and how not to miss opportunities to keep events happening; and,
- Mainstream practitioners, services and organisations who are erring on the side of caution, or perhaps have decided that playing an active, public and central role in running LGBTIQA+ events, festivals and gatherings is too hard or too risky.

HOW TO NAVIGATE THIS RESOURCE

1. Read the high-level summary, *Taking Back Our Pride: The Companion Guide*.
2. Compare and contrast with your own event and community experience/s.
3. Consider your supports, this can be a tough read.
4. Reflect on your own community: are you preparing, responding and/or recovering?
5. Refer to the relevant section of this *Taking Back Our Pride* resource for detail, practical steps and guidance. Suggested reading time for each section is: **Prepare (45 minutes), Respond (30 minutes) and Recover (15 minutes)**.

We've persisted with this project purposefully. When done well, LGBTIQA+ work is tough. Why? It has the very real potential to change, save and transform everyday LGBTIQA+ lives beyond opponents, gatekeepers and silos. Collectively we have the people, practice and wisdom to meet the current challenges of anti-LGBTIQA+ hate, vilification and violence.

Consistently, LGBTIQA+ leaders, community members and those that love them across regional and rural Victoria have told us that not enough people are showing up and turning up for them and the tough conversations. For showing up and turning up to this tough conversation, Rural Pride thanks you.

“We were not prepared”

“There’s been too many unnecessary cancellations and postponements”

“In 40 years of LGA work I’ve never seen one issue devastate staff and community members like this one.”

“It’s great to talk about this; we don’t talk about this”

“Our events have to go ahead, they don’t understand the impact of cancellations”

“I’ve never felt this unsafe as a queer worker in country Victoria; I haven’t worn my rainbow jacket for months, I don’t wanna have to question that but I do.”

“It’s definitely not under control. It’s definitely growing.”

“It’s not just a couple of people being dickheads”

“It wasn’t managed well, what we faced was unique; the information from Victoria Police was overwhelming and what could have potentially happened..... The guidance was to follow Victoria Police advice”

“There’s doxxing of [lesbians and trans women], and they’re the ones targeting gay men on dating apps. No-one is connecting the dots”

“It’s not safe to cancel these [LGBTIQA+] events”

“It WAS an emergency response”; it was quite shocking

“[Local LGBTIQA+ people] are changing our behaviour so we’re not being

clocked as queer in public spaces; openness is resistance but it’s still exhausting”

“I leave work and ask ‘Am I safe?’”

“We’re all coping it and feeling it”

“I don’t go out locally most nights, most days even, because I don’t feel safe.”

“There’s an urgency and an intensity.”

“It’s getting harder. It’s gotten harder”

*“The reason we’ve been around for decades is because we’ve just f***ing done sh*t.”*

“[As Mayor, and an ally] I only see a smidge of what you get, I can’t imagine.”

“Our events have to go ahead.”

“Now I’m taking back my power. I’m taking back my pride...”

INTRODUCTION: THE JOURNEY TO THIS RESOURCE

In mid-2022, in the wake of public homophobic comments from the then-mayor of West Wimmera Shire, a local gay couple reached out to Rural Pride Australia with community safety concerns. After being local, public and vocal in opposing the comments, Scott and Pat were targeted; their home would be defaced and damaged. From the start they had concerns: if they felt unsafe as two cis white gay men with privilege, and found it a challenge to navigate reporting and unsatisfactory responses by local police, what about the local trans and gender diverse friends and fellow community members?

In late 2022, at an inaugural gathering of leaders and practitioners from Aboriginal and LGBTIQ+ sectors, trans and gender diverse leaders sounded an alarm about an increase in anti-trans and gender diverse sentiment and violence in parts of Melbourne.

We now know these weren't isolated incidents, but the early warning signs of a global reality that had already come to Australian shores. In a number of presentations to LGBTIQ+ community in 2023 and 2024, Deakin University's Dr Josh Roose painted a picture of the local impacts of a global rise in anti-LGBTIQ+ hatred and violence, encouraging us to balance taking local anti-LGBTIQ+ hate and vilification very seriously whilst not being alarmed, and the importance of working together with a collective response to a very small, yet organised group of everyday Australians.

In 2023, the Victorian State-wide Rural LGBTIQ+ Community of Practice was born out of frustration. LGBTIQ+ leaders from across the state contacted Rural Pride, highlighting the lack of adequate regional and rural inclusion and resourcing in state-wide responses to anti-LGBTIQ+ hate and vilification. In their eyes, what wasn't helpful was metro-based LGBTIQ+ leaders and organisations speaking about their communities, cancellations and postponements, and getting it wrong.

Across a number of Community of Practice meetings and interviews with anti-LGBTIQ+ hate, vilification and violence-affected communities a picture emerged: postponements and cancellations involved regional and rural communities where mainstream organisations

were leading events or significant stakeholders in partnership with local LGBTIQ+ community. In all cases those mainstream organisations, typically a Council or health service, made a decision citing the 'advice' of Victoria Police and community safety concerns. In none of those cases was local LGBTIQ+ community included in decision-making; in all of those cases local LGBTIQ+ community was informed of a postponement or cancellation *after* a decision had been made. In all of those cases, mainstream organisations 'moved on' and left the burden of response to local, largely volunteer) LGBTIQ+ leadership and community.

Quite quickly there was a call for a resource for regional and rural LGBTIQ+ events, festivals and gatherings that supported local LGBTIQ+ community working with mainstream services and organisations. This resource would focus on keeping our events happening as safely as possible, and ensuring postponements and cancellations were a last resort. We heard that the new everyday regional and rural LGBTIQ+ reality needed a response that centred local LGBTIQ+ community, something that had clearly not been happening.

In a partnership² response to event cancellations in Wangaratta and Shepparton, we identified that regional and rural communities found a *Prepare, Respond & Recover* approach to anti-LGBTIQ+ hate and vilification most helpful. LGBTIQ+ leaders and community members appreciated a move from reaction to *Response* and to include *Recovery*, which stakeholders agreed was sorely absent. They realised the need for a new approach to *Prepare*.

Following funding from the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, Rural Pride Australia surveyed members of the Victorian Rural LGBTIQ+ Community of Practice in July and August 2024³, to better understand their sense of community safety, their experiences and the role of non-LGBTIQ+ stakeholders.

²Partnership with GV Pride, LINE Wangaratta, Thorne Harbour Country, Switchboard Victoria & Uniting Vic-Tas ([Appendix A](#))

³An executive summary can be found in [Appendix B](#).

Importantly, there are good stories to tell of regional and rural LGBTIQ+ events and gatherings across Victoria. Yet, when asked about regional and rural LGBTIQ+ community safety, respondents highlighted serious concerns. The vast majority of respondents (87.5%) described regional and rural LGBTIQ+ community safety as being largely absent, unstable and/or under threat, or in need of significant improvement.

When Rural Pride Australia asked about regional and rural LGBTIQ+ community events and gatherings in the first half of 2024, it found significant changes in event and gathering preparation, planning and delivery. Particularly, respondents across regional and rural Victoria told us:

- 50% of respondents had an LGBTIQ+ event or gathering delayed, postponed or cancelled in their community because of community safety concerns;
- 75% of respondents had an LGBTIQ+ event or gathering changed or altered in their community because of community safety concerns;
- Almost two-thirds of respondents (62.5%) reported that LGBTIQ+ events or gatherings hadn't been planned or considered in their community because of community safety concerns; and,
- 100% of respondents reported that online anti-LGBTIQ+ hate and vilification played a significant role, and negatively so, in their consideration of preparing and planning for, and delivery of, regional and rural LGBTIQ+ events and gatherings.

Importantly, a handful of communities contacted us to talk of their experiences 'off the record' out of concern that they and/or their community could be identified and further targeted and impacted. Rural Pride has coordinated response visits across the state, provided individual counselling support and conducted interviews with impacted communities, leaders and community members.

Additionally, we've included key mainstream partners to find out what has worked, not worked and is still missing to increase the likelihood that LGBTIQ+ events and gatherings go ahead where there is anti-LGBTIQ+ hate, vilification and violence.

WHAT WE HEARD

In seeking to better understand anti-LGBTIQ+ hate, vilification and violence and its impact on regional and rural LGBTIQ+ communities, we heard:

- It's real, it's not OK and it's not isolated;
- It's not new for us, it's just more intense and immediate (and exhausting);
- It's different; in particular, it's targeted and designed to disrupt and intimidate;
- It's not only misinformation but disinformation too;
- It's being downplayed; non-LGBTIQ+ people not taking us seriously or seeing it as urgent;
- It feels like there's a link with the attacks of Grindr users across the state (and over the border);
- We've been let down and side-lined by mainstream organisations and allies;
- We're carrying the burden of their reaction to something we didn't make a decision about; and,
- Our events have to go ahead, they don't understand the impact of cancellations.

Across regional and rural Victorian communities, LGBTIQ+ events, festivals and gatherings are still going ahead, thanks to skilled, smart and savvy LGBTIQ+ and allied leaders, practitioners and community members who have collectively adapted and changed the way they do visibility, safety and community. This resource is an effort to capture the best of this practice, knowledge and wisdom.

We've heard many times "*We don't know where to begin*". Perhaps this is one reason why, at the time of writing, there have been less events, festivals and gatherings than in previous years. Rural Pride believes we do know, thanks to examples across regional and rural Victoria.

This project is all about keeping regional and rural pride events happening within a supportive, local and LGBTIQ+-first ecosystem, and ensuring regional and rural LGBTIQ+ leaders and communities are visible, safe and connected. By not overestimating anti-LGBTIQ+ hate, vilification and violence, and not underestimating ourselves to be able to *Prepare, Respond and Recover*, we can better understand the new rules for preventing what should be a last resort: unnecessary postponements and cancellations.

Let's start...

'COMMUNITY' SAFETY: A CONNECTED LGBTIQA+ REALITY

LGBTIQA+ events, festivals and gatherings are particularly important in regional and rural Victoria because we hear that too often positive LGBTIQA+ visibility and inclusion work is the last thing to go on the local agenda. We deserve for our events that go ahead safely and successfully. Our events are an antidote of positive visibility and connection to the very real potential of local isolation and exclusion. They have a clear positive impact on LGBTIQA+ mental health, which needs to be balanced with the profound negative impact when our events are postponed or cancelled. In a decade of partnership work across regional and rural Victoria, communities have told us that safety and visibility are inextricably linked.

In seeking to better understand what 'regional and rural LGBTIQA+ safety' means to them, Rural Pride Australia has asked impacted LGBTIQA+ leaders, community members and communities, our State-wide Community of Rural LGBTIQA+ Practice members, as well as allies and supporters. This has built on what we've heard in every nook and cranny of regional, rural and remote Australia: LGBTIQA+ people are more likely to feel safe when they are supported, welcome, included and feel connection and belonging.

Firstly, what was most striking across in-community interviews, conversations and workshops was how many LGBTIQA+ people described their own safety as being deeply and profoundly linked to others. Rather than considering their own safety as just about their own individual safety as LGBTIQA+ people in regional and rural communities, many saw their safety inextricably linked with other LGBTIQA+ people.

"If one of us isn't safe, then none of us are completely safe."

Rather than this just being about local experience of collective community safety, many took into consideration real and perceived levels of safety for LGBTIQA+ people in neighbouring communities and across the region. In talking with young LGBTIQA+ people, many referred to examples of anti-LGBTIQA+ hate, vilification and violence in Melbourne, other Australian capital cities and other countries, and how this impacted their feeling of everyday safety.

Secondly, safety was not only seen as a lack of hurt and harm, particularly an absence of violence, abuse, harassment and discrimination, we also heard it is:

- The importance of cultural, 'emotional' and/or 'psychological' safety;
- Feeling free of fear or threat, regardless of who you are, how you identify, how you express your identity as well as who and how you love;
- Mainstream stakeholders proactively collaborating to create local LGBTIQA+-safe spaces;
- Supporting marginalised communities;
- A shared responsibility; and,
- More than 'visibility', it's about positive LGBTIQA+ visibility.

Thirdly, some excellent clues about LGBTIQA+ safety come from young LGBTIQA+ people in regional and rural schools with 'safe spaces'. When we've asked them about safety they've highlighted the importance of: (a) a specific, positive LGBTIQA+ space; (b) where they are central and priority in the experience; (c) where there are trusted adults and trusted friends and supporters; (d) where homo, bi and transphobia are not allowed, particularly deadnaming and misgendering; (e) where they feel safe, supported, welcome and included; (f) where there is LGBTIQA+ specific content; (g) where there is a non-judgmental approach and an openness to identity without prescription; (h) a place to find and connect with their tribe; and, (i) where everyone can use toilets safely.

Yet finally, what's the best definition of community safety for regional and rural LGBTIQA+ communities across Victoria? It's one that is formed by local LGBTIQA+ lived experience: LGBTIQA+ people are experts in their safety and best placed to lead on what that means in practice in the communities where they live, work and recreate. In this resource we have some promising clues about what processes have worked for a number of regional and rural Victorian communities.

WHAT THIS RESOURCE IS (AND ISN'T)

With input, feedback and wisdom from across the regional and rural Victoria, we're queering a traditional, mainstream *Prepare, Recover & Respond* model for the greater LGBTIQ+ good.

This resource is a summary of what regional and rural Victorian LGBTIQ+ leaders, community members and their supporters have told us about the last few years of LGBTIQ+ visibility and pride, and the impact of anti-LGBTIQ+ hate, vilification and violence. It's also a compilation of what we've been told are the most common reasons why LGBTIQ+ events have been altered, postponed or cancelled. Finally, it's a collection of current better practice that has been hard-fought, expertly put into local practice and generously shared, so that LGBTIQ+ events, festivals and gatherings are much more likely to go ahead; safely, with a minimal negative impact on LGBTIQ+ community and with maximum pride.

Firstly, this is for LGBTIQ+ leaders, community members and our most active allies so that they have their regional and rural Victorian best reflected back to them, as well as to let them know that their frustration, hurt and anger have been heard. We've collected some of the best answers to some of the most common pain points in doing non-metropolitan pride safely. The aim is that this will complement and build on the great LGBTIQ+ visibility and pride work already being done across the state in spite of years of anti-LGBTIQ+ hate, vilification and violence.

Secondly, it's for mainstream practitioners, services and organisations that have run LGBTIQ+ events, or attempted to, including Aspirational, Almost and Assumed Allies⁴, who want to understand what has gone wrong, the pivotal role they can ideally play and how not to miss opportunities to keep events, festivals and gatherings happening.

Thirdly, this resource is for those mainstream practitioners, services and organisations who are erring on the side of caution, or perhaps have decided that playing an active, public and central role in running LGBTIQ+ events, festivals and gatherings is too hard or too risky. You have an essential part to play in ensuring

that your local regional and rural ecosystems benefit from the visibility, participation and contribution of local LGBTIQ+ community. We also want this resource to be for those who wouldn't otherwise run LGBTIQ+ events, festivals and gatherings without some guidance, practical tips and a process that honours the best of regional and rural Victorian LGBTIQ+ pride.

This resource is not meant to have all of the answers, be a one-size-fits-all guide nor is it a guarantee that 100% of LGBTIQ+ events, festivals and gatherings can or will go ahead unaffected. This resource is very much an "in the meantime" practical guide designed to complement the plans, processes and partnerships that are already in place at a local, regional and state-wide level.

For those that don't have those processes, plans and templates, don't feel left out. One jewel in the LGBTIQ+ visibility and pride crown of regional and rural Victoria—the annual ChillOut Festival in Daylesford—has generously offered to share their templates and wisdom with any event organisers who reach out. Why is this important? In 2025 the ChillOut Festival surveyed the 1000s of people attending the long weekend of LGBTIQ+ pride and a remarkable 97% said that they felt safe. We'll also be drawing on some of ChillOut's most important lessons throughout this resource.

We've persisted with this project purposefully. When done well, LGBTIQ+ work is tough. Why? It has the very real potential to change, save and transform everyday LGBTIQ+ lives beyond opponents, gatekeepers and silos. Collectively we have the people, practice and wisdom to meet the current challenges of anti-LGBTIQ+ hate, vilification and violence.

Consistently, LGBTIQ+ leaders, community members and those that love them across regional and rural Victoria have told us that not enough people are showing up and turning up for them and the tough conversations. For showing up and turning up to this tough conversation, Rural Pride thanks you.

Let's meet that challenge...

⁴Witthaus, D.E. (2010) Beyond 'That's So Gay': Challenging homophobia in Australian schools, Hawker Brownlow Education: Melbourne.

PREPARE



**“We all thought we
had it covered.
We thought we were
prepared.”**

PREPARE

KEY FACTORS FOR ANTI-LGBTIQA+ HATE, VILIFICATION & VIOLENCE-AFFECTED COMMUNITIES

IDENTIFIED RED FLAGS IN RURAL LGBTIQA+ EVENT & COMMUNITY SAFETY			
	Is this relevant in your community?		
▶ Collaboration between local mainstream and LGBTIQA+ stakeholders is tokenistic, lacking or missing, and/or, mainstream stakeholders aren't providing significant, support, resourcing and allyship for LGBTIQA+ event/s.	YES	UNSURE	NO
▶ Local LGBTIQA+ community isn't at the heart of planning for local LGBTIQA+ events, particularly in risk and safety planning.	YES	UNSURE	NO
▶ A traditional, mainstream approach to event risk and safety is applied for the LGBTIQA+ event.	YES	UNSURE	NO
▶ There's a lack of identified roles, clear role descriptions and/or a plan for resource allocation for key stakeholders in planning for anti-LGBTIQA+ hate, vilification and violence before, during and after LGBTIQA+ events.	YES	UNSURE	NO
▶ There's minimal, or no, communication, engagement with and/or requests for significant input between lead mainstream stakeholders and local LGBTIQA+ community before and after an LGBTIQA+ event.	YES	UNSURE	NO

IDENTIFIED GREEN FLAGS IN RURAL LGBTIQA+ EVENT & COMMUNITY SAFETY			
	Is this relevant in your community?		
▶ Gather all stakeholders to understand their role in local LGBTIQA+ events and community safety; ▶ Develop an LGBTIQA+-endorsed Safe & Proud LGBTIQA+ Event Plan; and, ▶ Demonstrate allyship to the LGBTIQA+ community that is informed by local LGBTIQA+ community.	YES	UNSURE	NO
▶ Taking an LGBTIQA+-led and LGBTIQA+-first approach to planning LGBTIQA+ events.	YES	UNSURE	NO
▶ Taking an LGBTIQA+-led and LGBTIQA+-first approach to risk and safety planning for LGBTIQA+ events.	YES	UNSURE	NO
▶ Develop an Anti-LGBTIQA+ Hate, Vilification and Violence Response and Recovery Plan; ▶ Develop an accompanying operational plan that outlines roles, resources and support.	YES	UNSURE	NO
▶ Develop a Safe LGBTIQA+ Event Promotional Plan; ▶ Develop an LGBTIQA+ Event (Response and Recovery) Communications Plan; and, ▶ Partner for a Localised, Tailored Approach.	YES	UNSURE	NO

WHAT WE HEARD

“It was preventable”

“Our events have to go ahead, which is something they don’t understand the impact to LGBTIQ+ community of a postponement or cancellation – there’s our understanding and their understanding.”

“I wonder all the time if some kind of document was available, what would it be like if there was a risk assessment, how do you plan for the risk of all of the stakeholders and their communication; we didn’t know at the time, there was a lack of transparency and trust.”

*“All the f**k ups are things I wouldn’t have done [as a local LGBTIQ+ practitioner and leader]. They just went ahead and planned it without asking.”*

“There WILL be backlash – we need communication and honesty in that”

“It sends an important message to [local LGBTIQ+ people]: it shows that we’re not gonna hide in the shadows, we deserve to have safe spaces and nice experiences and that we don’t have to feel scared or ashamed.”

“I love a challenge and what I do, because I know it makes a difference but the roadblocks put in place impacts my mental health. I question if I can do it anymore.”

“But there’s no detail yet, what am I going to put into MY risk management plan”

“Everything that happened highlighted that we don’t have the processes in place to deal with this. There was no process because we’ve always done it that way and we work so well together, everyone putting ideas forward, we have a great coalition.”

“It feels like we matter less than Council’s risk assessment.”

“We don’t have a definition of community safety”

“Can you believe these straight youth workers asked why young [LGBTIQ+] people are allowed to kiss and hold hands at a Rainbow Ball? Really?!”

*“Don’t give up, this is temporary. We’re gonna tick all their f**king boxes and do it right so they’ve got nothing to come back at us with and it goes ahead.”*

“There’s new rules for future [LGBTIQ+] events given all the postponements; I feel like the new rules pander to opposition. There’s not the same level of scrutiny on other events that there are on queer events; then for young people? Well then there’s another layer”

“Our motto of “We can make it happen”, got us here, but might not serve us going forward”

PREPARE

CRITICAL FACTOR 1

WHOLE-OF-COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDER COLLABORATION (Red Flags)

Identified Risk Factor before events

- ▶ Collaboration between local stakeholders is tokenistic, lacking or missing, particularly: LGBTIQ+ community aren't true partners in event planning, and/or, mainstream stakeholders aren't providing significant, support, resourcing and allyship for LGBTIQ+ event/s.
- ▶ Note: in our operational debriefs with regional and rural LGBTIQ+ communities, they identified one staff member or LGBTIQ+ community leader working largely in isolation, in hindsight, as a key risk.

Example/s

- ▶ A mainstream organisation wants to run an event for a day of LGBTIQ+ significance; they asked an LGBTIQ+ community member, leader or group what they thought before going off and planning it themselves. Local LGBTIQ+ community members, leaders and groups are going to be invited to come along on the day. Some don't get invited.
- ▶ Local LGBTIQ+ Community Group B is planning an LGBTIQ+ community event; it's a challenge to get their local Council and mainstream health service to support the event beyond wishing them good luck and offering a box of promotional materials for their services that they can put out on the day; it's a struggle to engage local police to talk about risk and safety, and they feel dismissed.

What we've heard

- ▶ Mainstream organisations planning local LGBTIQ+ events in isolation with minimal, tokenistic or no input from key local LGBTIQ+ community;
- ▶ Local LGBTIQ+ community planning significant local LGBTIQ+ events with minimal, tokenistic or no support from key local mainstream organisations;
- ▶ Missed opportunities by mainstream organisations and their staff in demonstrating allyship to LGBTIQ+ community throughout planning for events;
- ▶ Mainstream organisations and their staff not being open to, or taking, constructive feedback about missed allyship opportunities and how their allyship can be more effective;
- ▶ There has been a different level of scrutiny and targeted and anti-LGBTIQ+ hate, vilification and violence when events are promoted for young LGBTIQ+ people and/or the trans and gender diverse community;
- ▶ Challenges in engaging local and regional police in risk and safety planning, and them not taking local LGBTIQ+ community concerns seriously;
- ▶ Some local LGBTIQ+ community, and mainstream organisations, leaving it "too late" to engage local police; and,
- ▶ A lack of collective community understanding of local LGBTIQ+ community safety as well as the importance of LGBTIQ+ pride and visibility.

PREPARE

CRITICAL FACTOR 1

WHOLE-OF-COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDER COLLABORATION (Green Flags)

All stakeholders critical to the safety of the local LGBTIQ+ ecosystem are gathered and fully understand their essential role in making and keeping local LGBTIQ+ events and community safe.

Gather all the of stakeholders critical to the safety of the local LGBTIQ+ ecosystem, ensuring:

- ▶ The initial gathering is, at a minimum, 3-6 months before the planned LGBTIQ+ event and asks “Who is missing?”⁴;
- ▶ At least one, or more, of the initial planning meetings are face-to-face, with key LGBTIQ+ stakeholders supported to attend;
- ▶ Attendance by local Council, mainstream health and police, ideally staff who are authorised to make decisions;
- ▶ All attendees articulate why the planned LGBTIQ+ event is important to them, their organisation and/or their community, as well as what can and will be contributed in demonstrated allyship;
- ▶ There is a consistent, collective and cohesive understanding of the common goal: a planned LGBTIQ+ event that’s safe;
- ▶ An assessment is conducted of the available resources and local capacity to deliver the event safely;
- ▶ Agreement is reached between key stakeholders about resourcing, information exchange, decision-making and ownership, possibly through signed MOUs;
- ▶ Individual staff members or community leaders are not planning and preparing in isolation;
- ▶ An agreed meeting schedule to complete the planning and preparation processes; and,
- ▶ Meeting time/s suit key local LGBTIQ+ stakeholders who often work as volunteers or volunqueers (e.g. not always in working hours).

Note: the best examples given by regional and rural LGBTIQ+ communities are where events are one of a number of shared LGBTIQ+ activities by multiple stakeholders who work together year-round.

Develop a *Safe & Proud LGBTIQ+ Event Plan* that is met with enthusiasm, endorsement and engagement by key local stakeholders – LGBTIQ+ and not.

All the stakeholders critical to the safety of the local LGBTIQ+ ecosystem work together to:

- ▶ Create a localised, multi-stakeholder LGBTIQ+ event and community safety plan: a *Safe & Proud LGBTIQ+ Event Plan*;
- ▶ Establish a collective ownership of the LGBTIQ+ event, community safety and planned impact beyond just including a logo;
- ▶ Maintain LGBTIQ+ cultural safety before, during and after the planned LGBTIQ+ event;
- ▶ Build greater levels of mutual trust, respect and understanding⁵;
- ▶ Support LGBTIQ+-safe events that all stakeholders can be proud of, participate in and that makes LGBTIQ+ community feel (even more) a part of their community; and,
- ▶ Foster long-term partnerships and collaboration beyond the lifespan of the planned LGBTIQ+ event.

⁴This is your opportunity to show solidarity and include LGBTIQ+ community from the intersections not represented. Include planning for Welcome to Country, accessibility (e.g. Auslan) and booking diverse performers and talent.

⁵For more information on establishing partnerships, consider the partnership resources available at: www.vichealth.vic.gov.au

Demonstrated allyship to the LGBTIQ+ community that's informed by local LGBTIQ+ community.

All stakeholders critical to the safety of the local *All non-LGBTIQ+ stakeholders critical to the safety of the local* LGBTIQ+ ecosystem demonstrate allyship and leverage their privilege as **organisations** by:

- ▶ Being part of building a visible, public and vocal coalition of key stakeholders supporting local LGBTIQ+ events and community safety;
- ▶ Using their local influence and authority to ensure any absent mainstream stakeholders join this coalition;
- ▶ Resourcing and supporting local LGBTIQ+ community to be key and central to the planning of LGBTIQ+ events;
- ▶ Offering their spaces as options for safe/r settings for LGBTIQ+ events and to provide an additional buffer to prevent anti-LGBTIQ+ hate, vilification and violence;
- ▶ Ensuring key organisational leaders support and plan to attend the LGBTIQ+ event, and encourage others to join them;
- ▶ Keeping LGBTIQ+ community central in key decisions if there is pre-event anti-LGBTIQ+ hate, vilification and violence;
- ▶ Taking constructive feedback about missed allyship opportunities and how their allyship can be more effective;
- ▶ Having pre-prepared statements that support local LGBTIQ+ community and call out homo, bi and transphobia if there is pre-event anti-LGBTIQ+ hate, vilification and violence; and,
- ▶ Maintaining a position that postponements and cancellations are a last resort that can only be made in close consultation with key LGBTIQ+ community leaders.

All non-LGBTIQ+ stakeholders critical to the safety of the local LGBTIQ+ ecosystem ensure they demonstrate allyship as **individuals** by:

- ▶ Learning, listening and critically reflecting on their own allyship conduct throughout the planning process;
- ▶ Making sure, and waiting until, LGBTIQ+ community have spoken before they do;
- ▶ Resisting the need to take over the planning process because they believe they “know better”;
- ▶ Equally, sharing their own knowledge and skills in a way that's empowering for local LGBTIQ+ leaders and community;
- ▶ Seeking out answers to their own basic LGBTIQ+ 101 questions that doesn't require the ‘identity labour’ of local LGBTIQ+ lived experience;
- ▶ Taking constructive feedback about missed allyship opportunities, how their privilege can be leveraged and how their allyship can be more effective;
- ▶ Challenging the LGBTIQ+ resistance they see and hear, including homo, bi and transphobic comments, jokes and practices; and,
- ▶ Recognising that ‘ally’ is something that only LGBTIQ+ community can bestow upon them.

Note: in Beyond ‘*That's So Gay*’, Daniel Witthaus introduced ‘Almost Allies’⁶, highlighting that sometimes we assume people are greater allies than they actually are, and the dilemma of challenging those who claim they are LGBTIQ+ allies. Know the difference between Assumed Allies, Aspirational Allies, Almost Allies and those demonstrating proactive, consistent allyship.

⁶Witthaus, D.E. (2010) Beyond ‘That's So Gay’: Challenging homophobia in Australian schools, Hawker Brownlow Education: Melbourne.

WORKING WITH LOCAL COUNCILS & VICTORIA POLICE

When asked about their local and regional stakeholders, collaborators and partners for regional and rural LGBTIQ+ community safety, respondents highlighted serious concerns and/or question marks in relation to the role of local Councils and Victoria Police. Particularly, respondents across regional and rural Victoria told us:

- Only one-third were satisfied with local engagement and involvement by their local Council in the planning, delivery and follow-up with an LGBTIQ+ event or gathering; and,
- Only one-third were satisfied with local engagement and involvement by Victoria Police in the planning, delivery and follow-up with an LGBTIQ+ event or gathering.

Local Councils

At their best, local government can lead, gather and support local and regional stakeholders to deliver the best outcomes for local community.

Although so many LGBTIQ+ leaders, groups and communities recognise the potential of partnering with local mainstream organisations to run LGBTIQ+ events, particularly Councils, others recognise the risk, at the time of writing, is too great. It's worthwhile to consider an honest conversation between key stakeholders about the risk to local LGBTIQ+ events going ahead if Council is a key or lead partner and/or a Council venue is being used.

For example, at the time of writing one regional LGBTIQ+ group is strategically choosing not to partner with local Councils in order to ensure their local LGBTIQ+ events go ahead across the communities they work with.

"We've never relied on Councils, that's why we've always gone ahead."

ChillOut Festival includes local Council, Hepburn Shire Council, as a key partner, however they are clear that: (a) Council can only advise ChillOut; (b) ChillOut Festival makes all decisions on events; and, (c) their events will go ahead "no matter what".

Victoria Police

"We can all agree [the relationship between LGBTIQ+ community and Victoria Police] isn't great, yet we can't yet agree on what should be done about it, and how"
LGBTIQ+ Community Leader

Although the relationship between LGBTIQ+ communities and Victoria Police is far from ideal, most of the LGBTIQ+ groups, leaders and community members we've spoken to are clear that their local LGBTIQ+ events cannot go ahead without some police engagement. Some LGBTIQ+ community leaders have expressed frustration and disappointment that

their regional and rural reality is not reflected in broad statements and approaches from state-wide LGBTIQ+ leaders, services and organisations.

*"I'm so sick of Melbourne people telling us not to partner with police when it's the only f**king way we can go ahead here, and you can quote me."*

The good news is that some rural LGBTIQ+ communities do have positive working relationships with police, yet largely this is only where there is an existing, ongoing and significant relationship with an individual Victoria Police member, rather than there being a trusting relationship with Victoria Police in general. For example, as with their relationship with Council, ChillOut Festival has a close and longstanding relationship with local Victoria Police, yet is clear that Victoria Police can only advise them.

Unfortunately, at the time of writing, only the occasional good story isn't good enough. We heard that too many LGBTIQ+ leaders and community members are 'tired' and 'frustrated' at attempting to reach out to Victoria Police locally when planning events. Across regional and rural Victoria, we heard that there isn't consistency in an LGBTIQ+ Liaison Officer (LLO) existing at stations – if there is one in town, being available and/or actually understanding local LGBTIQ+ community and their needs.

"It's only the occasional LLO."

This is even more challenging if there have been previous unsuccessful attempts to report anti-LGBTIQ+ hate, vilification and violence.

In other instances, local LGBTIQ+ leaders have attempted to engage Victoria Police with completed risk assessments and concerns of actual pre-event, and probable event, anti-LGBTIQ+ hate, vilification and violence, and felt that this had been met with minimising, dismissiveness or responses that have felt homo, bi and transphobic.

"It's quite frustrating and hurtful after an experience of vilification to be met with their responses. Even the LLOs are often not queer themselves and don't seem to really get it"

Victoria Police recommends that if LGBTIQ+ communities do intend to engage them, that event organisers should contact them at least 3-6 months before the event. An additional encouragement is for event organisers to alert the managers of Victoria Police's LGBTIQ+ Liaison Program to the planned event so they can complement local and regional policing efforts.

We also recommend reading and reviewing Victoria Police's own information, advice and guidance on Prejudice-Motivated Crime: www.police.vic.gov.au/prejudice-motivated-crime.

⁷It's important to note that LGBTIQ+ events have gone ahead, and do, without police engagement.

⁸See: <https://www.police.vic.gov.au/LGBTIQ+liaison-officers> and <https://www.police.vic.gov.au/LGBTIQ+community-commitment-and-consultation>.

PREPARE

CRITICAL FACTOR 2

TRUE PARTNERSHIP WITH LOCAL LGBTIQA+ COMMUNITY (Red Flags)

Identified Risk Factor before events:

- ▶ Local LGBTIQA+ community isn't at the heart of planning for local LGBTIQA+ events, particularly in risk and safety planning.

Example

- ▶ A Council is organising their IDAHOBIT flag raising, and has asked for an online meeting with members of the local LGBTIQA+ community group. The previous year there had been a cancellation of an LGBTIQA+ event after their CEO made an isolated decision with Victoria Police without consulting, or communicating the outcome, to LGBTIQA+ community.

A well-meaning cis, heterosexual Council worker says, looking at his computer screen, and not the volunteer LGBTIQA+ community members giving their unpaid time online:

"I just need [this] from you to put in, so I can finish MY risk management plan for my manager."

What we heard

- ▶ Mainstream organisations planning local LGBTIQA+ events in isolation with minimal, tokenistic or no input from key local LGBTIQA+ community yet calling them 'partners';
- ▶ A lack of LGBTIQA+ cultural safety for LGBTIQA+ leaders and community members before, during and after planned LGBTIQA+ events;
- ▶ Missed opportunities by mainstream organisations and their staff in demonstrating allyship to LGBTIQA+ community throughout the planning process;
- ▶ Mainstream organisations and their staff not being open to, or taking, constructive feedback about missed allyship opportunities and how their allyship can be more effective;
- ▶ Mainstream organisations, their leaders and staff members not factoring in the community impact of the postponement or cancellation of LGBTIQA+ events;
- ▶ A lack of clarity and/or adequate documentation about who leads in key decision-making for LGBTIQA+ events;
- ▶ Unnecessary postponements or cancellations due to anti-LGBTIQA+ hate, vilification and violence that could've been avoided with earlier and/or better engagement of LGBTIQA+ community;
- ▶ Key stakeholders lacking a consistent, collective and cohesive understanding of the common goal: a planned LGBTIQA+ event that's safe;
- ▶ LGBTIQA+ community not being at the heart of a localised, multi-stakeholder LGBTIQA+ event and community safety plan that has been created by a coalition of key stakeholders;
- ▶ LGBTIQA+ events and related activities not being altered significantly to account for safety concerns despite local LGBTIQA+ intelligence and advice; and,
- ▶ A lack of acknowledgment or appreciation for the 'load', or weight, of LGBTIQA+ identity carried by LGBTIQA+ leaders and community members through the planning process, particularly if they're volunteers.

PREPARE

CRITICAL FACTOR 2

TRUE PARTNERSHIP WITH LOCAL LGBTIQA+ COMMUNITY (Green Flags)

Taking an LGBTIQA+-led or LGBTIQA+-first approach to planning LGBTIQA+ events, ensuring local LGBTIQA+ leaders, community members and those that love them are true partners that feel safe, supported, welcome and included.

All stakeholders critical to the safety of the local LGBTIQA+ ecosystem take an LGBTIQA+-led to planning LGBTIQA+ events, including:

- ▶ Working alongside LGBTIQA+ community in the planning process to determine and clarify who is best placed to lead, or co-lead, the LGBTIQA+ community event to achieve the best, and safest, outcomes for the LGBTIQA+ community;
- ▶ Documenting this, as part of an agreement/MOU signing process;
- ▶ Determining, alongside local LGBTIQA+ community, the value in engaging other LGBTIQA+ events and festivals, such as Midsumma and ChillOut⁹; and,
- ▶ Undertaking an assessment of the partnership between key stakeholders for the LGBTIQA+ event, such as through VicHealth's partnership resources¹⁰.

A note on how we understand 'partnerships': the VicHealth Partnership Tool¹¹ highlights that partnerships are at their best when all stakeholders agree upon the sharing of four key things – information, resources, decision-making and 'territory'.

It suggests that challenges arise when there isn't an agreed understanding of the level of sharing. All of the **Rural LGBTIQA+ Event & Community Safety Red Flags** fall into what is outlined as the lowest level of partnership (networking) – limited information exchange information with little time, trust and resourcing. The other three levels partnerships outlined involve progressively more time and more trust and resources:

- ▶ Coordination: information is exchanged and activities are subsequently altered;
- ▶ Co-operation: activities are significantly altered, with resources and territory shared; and,
- ▶ Collaboration: enhancing capacity of partners, and 'giving up' resources and/or 'territory'.

It's perhaps little surprise that these three levels of partnership correspond with the Rural LGBTIQA+ Community Event & Safety Green Flags.

All stakeholders critical to the safety of the local LGBTIQA+ ecosystem take an LGBTIQA+-first approach to planning LGBTIQA+ events, ensuring local LGBTIQA+ leaders, community members and those that love them feel safe, supported, welcome and included, particularly:

- ▶ Feeling safe: to share their local lived experience, to speak up with alternative viewpoints or ideas, to disagree;
- ▶ Feeling supported: to attend every meeting, to provide input into all aspects of the planning process, to fully participate in the LGBTIQA+ event;
- ▶ Feeling welcome: at every table, in every room, on every online meeting;
- ▶ Feeling included: in all aspects of the planning process, in all discussions, during decision-making, especially in the event of anti-LGBTIQA+ hate, vilification and violence;
- ▶ Understanding that developing greater levels of trust requires time and action, including a demonstration of allyship already described; and,
- ▶ Maintaining a focus on common goals where differences arise, especially where a mainstream organisation, leader and/or staff member has a different view to an LGBTIQA+ leader or community member. What is the 'thing' that all stakeholders can go back to again and again as our reason for being together and collaborating?

A note on (emotional) safety, groups and managing differences: Psychotherapist Linda Yael Schiller challenges the traditional (and patriarchal) idea that groups must move through a 'storming' stage with a grappling for power and control to settle differences. Instead, she's found an effective alternative: 'establishing a relational base' when bringing together a new group. She believes conflict arises when people feel a lack of emotional safety when groups skip over a process to arrive at agreed-upon common goals that reflect the similarities and differences of all participants. It can also happen when moving too quickly through agendas or processes. A remedy when these moments arise can be pausing or slowing down, as well as revisiting, updating and/or altering common agreed-upon goals, rather than blaming individual participants.

⁹This could also include regional events, festivals and LGBTIQA+ groups, including GV Pride, LINE Wangaratta, Hume Phoenix, Gippsland Pride Initiative, Frolic Festival, Bendigo Pride, Sunraybow Connections, Geelong Rainbow Inc, Wimmera Pride Project and HEY Project Partners.

¹⁰For more information on establishing partnerships, consider the resources available at: www.vichealth.vic.gov.au

¹¹John McLeod (2005), The Partnerships Analysis Tool For Partners in Health Promotion, VicHealth: Carlton South. Updated in 2016. Rethinking Stages of Development in Women's Groups: Implications for Practice (Linda Yael Schiller), Social Work with Groups, Vol. 20(3) 1997 by The Haworth Press, Inc

¹²Rethinking Stages of Development in Women's Groups: Implications for Practice (Linda Yael Schiller), Social Work with Groups, Vol. 20(3) 1997 by The Haworth Press, Inc

PREPARE

CRITICAL FACTOR 3

TAKE AN LGBTIQA+-FIRST/LED APPROACH TO RISK & SAFETY (Red Flags)

Identified Risk Factor before events:

- ▶ Taking an LGBTIQA+-led and LGBTIQA+-first approach to planning LGBTIQA+ events, ensuring local LGBTIQA+ leaders, community members and those that love them are true partners that feel safe, supported, welcome and included.

Example

- ▶ A hardworking LGBTIQA+ staff member of a mainstream health organisation is concerned about online anti-LGBTIQA+ hate in the lead up to an LGBTIQA+ event. Following the event risk management plan, she contacts Victoria Police's local LGBTIQA+ Liaison Officer.

"Do you know that we actually informed the LLO beforehand and he said, 'All good' and fobbed us off?"

The event was targeted by protesters who turned up on the night.

What we heard

- ▶ Mainstream organisations and leaders making decisions about risk and safety that they believe are best for LGBTIQA+ communities independent of LGBTIQA+ community;
- ▶ Mainstream organisations not factoring in the current climate of anti-LGBTIQA+ hate, vilification and violence nor the community impact of (postponements and) cancellations, and missing opportunities to "run scenarios" for possible, predictable anti-LGBTIQA+ hate, vilification and violence;
- ▶ Mainstream organisations centring their own risk in decisions to postpone and cancel, at the expense of local LGBTIQA+ community, whilst telling them that it's removing risk to them;
- ▶ Mainstream organisations and Victoria Police missing opportunities by ignoring, dismissing or not seeking out the safety intelligence and guidance from local LGBTIQA+ community (and thus missing opportunities to maximise community safety);
- ▶ Mainstream organisations telling LGBTIQA+ leaders, community members and groups that LGBTIQA+ events are "too hard";
- ▶ LGBTIQA+ leaders, community members and groups reporting that there mainstream organisations are now setting "new rules" in risk assessment for LGBTIQA+ community events in light of anti-LGBTIQA+ hate, vilification and violence in recent years;
- ▶ LGBTIQA+ leaders, community members and groups reporting these new rules aren't applied for any other community event or group; and,
- ▶ LGBTIQA+ leaders, community members and groups reporting these new rules are even more strict, onerous and/or draconian for LGBTIQA+ events focused on young LGBTIQA+ people and/or trans and gender diverse people: "We now have to jump through extra hoops, but it's a different set of rules".

Taking an LGBTIQA+-led and LGBTIQA+-first approach to risk and safety for LGBTIQA+ events, ensuring local LGBTIQA+ leaders, community members and those that love them are essential partners in keeping events happening and safe with maximum community impact.

All stakeholders critical to the delivery of the local LGBTIQA+ event take an LGBTIQA+-led approach to risk and safety, especially by:

- ▶ Centring and privileging LGBTIQA+ community intelligence and guidance to risk and safety throughout the planning process and pre-event: “It’s our job to notice, to let people know who can respond, who will respond; we know it’s happening and when it’s coming”;
- ▶ Recognising that local LGBTIQA+ community are experts in their safety, and that mainstream organisations, Victoria Police and allies cannot tell them if they are feeling safe or not;
- ▶ Asking safety questions of local LGBTIQA+ leaders, community members and those that love them, such as “What’s important for you to feel safe at events?”, “How do you keep yourself safe on the way to, at and going home from events?” and “Have there been any changes recently that make you feel more or less safe?”
- ▶ Including LGBTIQA+ event performers, key staff and/or volunteers as key stakeholders in planning, risk and safety; and,
- ▶ Asking local LGBTIQA+ leaders, community members and those that love them how they feel about LGBTIQA+ event alterations, cancellations and postponements due to anti-LGBTIQA+ hate, vilification and violence, and their risk and safety appetite.

All stakeholders critical to the delivery of the local LGBTIQA+ event take an LGBTIQA+-first approach to risk and safety, by:

- ▶ Starting with the assumption that the event will go ahead, unless a decision is made otherwise in true collaboration with local LGBTIQA+ community;
- ▶ Assuming that there is a new reality for regional and rural LGBTIQA+ pride and visibility: there is a likelihood of some level of anti-LGBTIQA+ hate, vilification and violence that can be expected, some of which can be predicted and planned for;
- ▶ Understanding the profoundly negative impact of postponing and cancelling of LGBTIQA+ events has on LGBTIQA+ community, and that this can be downplayed, dismissed and/or ignored by mainstream organisations, leaders and the broader community;
- ▶ Recognising that anti-LGBTIQA+ hate, vilification and violence can lead to LGBTIQA+-last, emotional and reactive responses, and subsequent postponements and cancellations that could be unnecessary; and,
- ▶ Making a commitment to local LGBTIQA+ leaders and community members that decisions about the event being altered, postponed or cancelled will not be made without their input.

PREPARE

CRITICAL FACTOR 3

TAKE AN LGBTIQA+-FIRST/LED APPROACH TO RISK & SAFETY (Green Flags)

A commitment is undertaken by all stakeholders critical to the delivery of the local LGBTIQA+ event to develop an *Anti-LGBTIQA+ Hate, Vilification and Violence Response and Recovery Plan* in the event of anti-LGBTIQA+ hate, vilification and violence.

All stakeholders critical to the delivery of the local LGBTIQA+ event develop an *Anti-LGBTIQA+ Hate, Vilification and Violence Response and Recovery Plan* that is agreed-upon by local LGBTIQA+ community, and includes:

- ▶ An LGBTIQA+ community-first decision-making process¹³ for responding to anti-LGBTIQA+ hate, vilification and violence that is transparent, and balances the benefit of the event with the risks of going ahead or not;
- ▶ “Running scenarios” of potential anti-LGBTIQA+ hate, vilification and violence, based on state-wide, regional and local LGBTIQA+ intelligence and guidance, and what options there could, and will, be in response and recovery;
- ▶ The establishment of an ‘LGBTIQA+ Safety Command Centre’¹⁴ that is the process of bringing together key stakeholders in the event of anti-LGBTIQA+ hate, vilification and violence that warrants critical, immediate and consequential decisions about the local LGBTIQA+ event going ahead. Pre-determined, agreed-upon local LGBTIQA+ representation in this ‘Command Centre’ is non-negotiable.

A note on decision-making: in communities where attempts have been made at collective decision-making, they’ve found it useful to have discussions about the risk ‘weight’ given to examples of pre-event anti-LGBTIQA+ hate, vilification and violence, and what would constitute a serious threat to an event going ahead. For (real) example, does someone sending e-mails or social media messages from rural Queensland or Utah, USA warrant an event in rural Victoria being postponed? What if someone knows particular trigger words to warrant a WorkSafe investigation? Or if someone calls to say they’ll travel to your community to protest at the LGBTIQA+ event?

A note on risk-assessments: a number of workers with young LGBTIQA+ people said that whilst they don’t have LGBTIQA+-specific risk assessment framework they DO see it as vital to utilise a section for ‘Emotional’ or ‘Psychological’ Safety to cover any LGBTIQA+ community safety risks beyond the focus of ‘Physical Risk’. Consider partnering with organisations that have conducted LGBTIQA+-inclusive risk assessments.

A note on LGBTIQA+ community risk and impact: until now, too many mainstream organisations, leaders and staff members, as well as Victoria Police, have assumed that in postponing or cancelling LGBTIQA+ events deals with the main “risk”. The reality for regional and rural communities is the risk to LGBTIQA+ communities that they face in the aftermath of a postponement or cancellation, too often ignored, dismissed easily or under-acknowledged. The burden of this is too often unseen, and carried as risk by, and a burden to, local and regional LGBTIQA+ leaders.

A note on sharing risk assessments and safety plans: we’ve heard concerns from some communities that certain community leaders and members, known locally for their homo, bi and transphobia, will “demand” to see risk assessments and safety plans ahead of local events out of “concern” and “freedom of information”. In one case, a ‘concerned’ community leader was from the mainstream organisation that ultimately postponed an LGBTIQA+ event. These communities are adamant that these plans should only be shared with key stakeholders and communicated to community members.

¹³The evidence is in: the best decisions for LGBTIQA+ community cannot be made over a phone call between a mainstream organisation’s CEO and Victoria Police.

¹⁴Some regional trans and gender diverse leaders have called this an ‘LGBTIQA+ War Room’.

TEMPORARY PUBLIC SPACES VS PERMANENT VENUES

As part of an LGBTIQ+ Crowded Places Safety¹⁵ training seminar, Victoria Police presented and told participants, “you need to be prepared for what you can reasonably expect and anticipate”. Noting an escalation of right-wing extremism and anti-LGBTIQ+ narratives, and its impact on LGBTIQ+ communities, LGBTIQ+ leaders, event organisers and community members were given practical advice and information for future events.

In their presentation, the Department of Justice and Community Safety (DJCS) highlighted a need to focus on a key concept of “lessening vulnerabilities” through the use of their resources¹⁶, which can assist event organisers with:

- high-level starting points for key roles and understanding risk, as well as rights and responsibilities; and,
- how to develop a four-point security plan:
 - (a) Deter: promote that police are involved or security is present;
 - (b) Detect: use event registration, train staff;
 - (c) Delay: have an evacuation plan; and,
 - (d) Respond: know what you’ll do, when to call Victoria Police and other guidance.

One important distinction made for event organising was whether events were in public, open and ‘temporary’ spaces or at ‘fixed (permanent) sites’. For events in public spaces, it was recommended that police needed to be engaged and involved. For events at ‘fixed sites’ it was recommended that security is used, and police informed.

In several communities, LGBTIQ+ leaders and event organisers highlighted their reality, when responding to people outside their community commenting on them not doing events in open, public spaces:

*“If it’s local and visible at the moment, it’ll be targeted. We’ve only gone ahead because we’ve had venues with f**king fences; we’re far away from [holding an event in an open park] being a f**king option. I know that’s basic, but it’s the f**king truth, and I have to pay double for security.”*

“We usually only use venues with security so it looks like any other public function to the public.”

*“If you put on a free outdoor event you’re gonna have f*****s so we have to have something in place.”*

Where security is used, LGBTIQ+ leaders and event organisers have talked about security staff needing a basic understanding LGBTIQ+ cultural safety, an induction briefing into the local LGBTIQ+ community members who’ll be attending and strategies for peaceful de-escalation and disengagement.

In other communities, temporary fencing and security is a non-negotiable cost to factor in for LGBTIQ+ events in local parks.

Several LGBTIQ+ leaders and event organisers highlighted that paying for security meant that they relied less on police involvement, and that this meant that police had less influence on whether local LGBTIQ+ events went ahead if facing anti-LGBTIQ+ hate, vilification and violence.

All of this means one fact cannot be ignored: all of the additional time preparing and planning to respond to the escalation of right-wing extremism and anti-LGBTIQ+ narratives requires additional funding and resourcing. It’s a lot more work to *Prepare*, without even considering *Response* and *Recovery*.

As one long-time LGBTIQ+ leader said in a State-wide Rural LGBTIQ Community of Practice meeting:

“Funding for LGBTIQ+ events needs to reflect the world we’re living in; that a Prepare-Respond-Recover approach needs to be the standard.”

¹⁵This half-day seminar took place in March 2024, and was a collaboration between the Department of Justice and Community Safety (DJCS), Victoria Police and the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing. Presenters included representatives from DJCS’ Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) Unit, Victoria Police’s Priority and Safer Communities Division, and Dr Josh Roose (Deakin University).

¹⁶ <https://www.justice.vic.gov.au/safer-communities>

PREPARE

CRITICAL FACTOR 4

ROLE CLARITY IN PREPARATION, RESPONSE & RECOVERY (Red Flags)

Identified Risk Factor before events:

- ▶ There's a lack of role descriptions and/or clarity of roles of key stakeholders, and a lack of a plan for the allocation of resources and support for LGBTIQ+ community in the event of anti-LGBTIQ+ hate, vilification and violence before, during and after LGBTIQ+ events.

Example

- ▶ A mainstream organisation runs an LGBTIQ+ event which attracts online anti-LGBTIQ+ hate, vilification and violence, and daily phone calls and an e-mail. After talking with Victoria Police, they decide to postpone the event without input from local LGBTIQ+ community. There had not been any preparation for who would do what and when, if this situation occurred. After announcing the postponement to registered attendees, they're not sure if they should check in on local LGBTIQ+ community so they don't, assuming that if they weren't OK that they'd reach out to them. No resources or supports are offered, allocated or coordinated by this mainstream organisation, and local LGBTIQ+ leaders, community members and those that love them feel, upset confused and frustrated. Unsure of their role as a consequence, LGBTIQ+ leaders, as volunteers, step up to support the unseen aftermath of anti-LGBTIQ+ hate, vilification and violence.

What we heard

- ▶ LGBTIQ+ leaders being unsure about what would happen if there was pre-event or event anti-LGBTIQ+ hate, vilification and violence, and/or key stakeholders making assumptions that they'd "work [a response] out":

"If something was to happen it would be a challenge to work out who would lead the response and recovery";

- ▶ LGBTIQ+ leaders, community members and those that love them describing that they (understandably) reacted more than they responded to anti-LGBTIQ+ hate, vilification and violence;
- ▶ LGBTIQ+ leaders, community members and those that love them describing how they weren't engaged, consulted or updated about if, when and how there would be a response from mainstream organisations, leaders and staff members;
- ▶ Mainstream organisations, leaders and staff members not responding, or having a significant delay in response, to anti-LGBTIQ+ hate, vilification and violence– from an LGBTIQ+ community perspective;
- ▶ An absence of an allocation of resources and support for LGBTIQ+ community in response and recovery to anti-LGBTIQ+ hate, vilification and violence; and,
- ▶ One example of a community leader being referred to a mainstream EAP provider following them experiencing in-community anti-LGBTIQ+ violence. The mainstream EAP provider listened to LGBTIQ+ leader, apologised, saying that it wasn't in their area of expertise, and wished them well in finding alternative support.

All stakeholders critical to the delivery of the local LGBTIQ+ event develop an accompanying operational plan for the Anti-LGBTIQ+ Hate, Vilification and Violence Response and Recovery Plan that focuses on roles, resources and support for LGBTIQ+ community.

All stakeholders critical to the delivery of the local LGBTIQ+ event develop an accompanying localised operational plan for the *Anti-LGBTIQ+ Hate, Vilification and Violence Response and Recovery Plan* that clearly outlines roles, role descriptions and who will fill them, that is agreed-upon by local LGBTIQ+ community, including the key roles of:

- ▶ Centring and privileging LGBTIQ+ community intelligence and guidance to risk and safety throughout the planning process and pre-event: “It’s our job to notice, to let people know who can respond, who will respond; we know it’s happening
- ▶ Getting the answers to critical questions of what, when, where, why and who in both response and recovery;
- ▶ Leading the response to scenarios that have already been ‘run’, such as anti-LGBTIQ+ graffiti and damage to venues pre-event, on-site anti-LGBTIQ+ protests, assault of community members and online anti-LGBTIQ+ hate, vilification and violence;
- ▶ Clarifying who will lead first responses, how escalation will happen, when police will be contacted, accessible exit plans and how to keep community members, staff, volunteers and performers safe;
- ▶ Engaging, consulting and updating key LGBTIQ+ leaders and community members of response and recovery in the event of pre-event and event anti-LGBTIQ+ hate, vilification and violence; and,
- ▶ Co-ordinating resources and support key LGBTIQ+ leaders and community members in response and recovery in the event of pre-event and event anti-LGBTIQ+ hate, vilification and violence.

All stakeholders critical to the delivery of the local LGBTIQ+ event develop an accompanying localised operational plan for the *Anti-LGBTIQ+ Hate, Vilification and Violence Response and Recovery Plan* that clearly outlines the allocation of resources and support for LGBTIQ+ community in the event of anti-LGBTIQ+ hate, vilification and violence, including:

- ▶ Mapping local, regional and state-wide capacity, resource and support options for key LGBTIQ+ leaders and community members that is LGBTIQ+-safe, LGBTIQ+-inclusive and trauma-informed;
- ▶ Engaging LGBTIQ+ leaders and community members to check in and offer options for support on the day, in the days after and one week after pre-event and/or event anti-LGBTIQ+ hate, vilification and violence;
- ▶ Proactively checking with key LGBTIQ+ leaders and community members to ensure resources and supports are actually LGBTIQ+-safe, LGBTIQ+-inclusive and trauma-informed;
- ▶ Supporting key LGBTIQ+ leaders and community members to support more isolated, less engaged members of the LGBTIQ+ community;
- ▶ Coordinating a meeting of stakeholders critical to the delivery of the local LGBTIQ+ event to review the response effort; and,
- ▶ Planning for an ongoing recovery effort for LGBTIQ+ leaders, community members and those that love them.

PREPARE

CRITICAL FACTOR 4

ROLE CLARITY IN PREPARATION, RESPONSE & RECOVERY (Green Flags)

A note on keeping LGBTIQ+ community members safe going to and from events: a number of communities have included safety information in their promotion and event instructions that encourages street safety when coming to and from local events, including seeking safety in numbers and having someone to inform when you've arrived home safely. Although this need for safety planning shouldn't be required, we understand it could be important for some events to go ahead.

A note on factoring in support for the safety of performers and key staff: increasingly we've heard that any performers and/or key staff involved with local LGBTIQ+ events have been targeted before and after events. A role for event organisers to factor in is who will be supporting the safety of performers and/or key staff, and 'lessening the vulnerabilities' of their arrival and departure from events.

For example, a drag performer had been targeted online in the lead-up to a rural LGBTIQ+ event. They were unable to find a carpark close to a venue, and had to walk some distance from their car to the venue – in partial or full hair, make-up and outfit – in a community that they had never been to before. After the event, they felt unsafe walking back to their car alone. In hindsight they wished they'd asked for a carpark at the venue, or at least had someone meet them to walk to and from the venue. They added being able to text when they got home safely would've been a bonus. So too, we heard stories of (targeted) anti-LGBTIQ+ hate, vilification and violence when performers and/or key staff left events alone.

A note on pre-event safety checks of venues or spaces: some of the 'good stories' that communities told were where one or more people conducted checks of venues or spaces the day before and/or in the hours before a local LGBTIQ+ event. Examples included a brief walk around a space and/or a safety 'drive-by' for venues was described as alerting event organisers to safety concerns. In a number of cases this meant that anti-LGBTIQ+ graffiti, damage and/or potentially unknown groups of people could be identified and dealt with well before LGBTIQ+ community members and other attendees arrived.

A note on utilising LGBTIQ+ community: a number of LGBTIQ+ leaders and event organisers have begun proactively engaging local community to not only be volunteers, but also to be extra layers of safety, security and certainty. We've heard mixed experiences of engaging LGBTIQ+ community in solidarity from outside local community.

For example, one local LGBTIQ+ event had volunteers ready to use a giant inclusive rainbow flag to shield LGBTIQ+ community members and attendees seeing the removal of any potential protesters, or to stand in front of any members of the public attempting to take photos and video of event attendees.

"We made sure we had the bears, the Dykes on Bikes and the artists all ready to go, to be on the look out and ready if we needed them."

Finally, some communities were clear that inviting mainstream organisations was a strategy they employed to not only provide an extra layer of security, it was also potentially extra (non-LGBTIQ+) witnesses to any potential anti-LGBTIQ+ hate, vilification and violence. We note how unfortunate it is that, at least in some communities, local LGBTIQ+ people report that they are not certain they'd be considered as credible witnesses to any crime.

Identified Risk Factor before events:

- ▶ There's minimal, or no, communication, engagement with and/or requests for significant input between lead mainstream stakeholders and local LGBTIQ+ community before and after an LGBTIQ+ event.

Example

- ▶ A council decides they want to run an LGBTIQ+ event for young LGBTIQ+ people after successful events in neighbouring and regional Council areas. Key LGBTIQ+ leaders and staff who delivered these events were asked for their advice, felt that this was dismissed and felt like cis, heterosexual youth workers not from the Council area, and who hadn't run events, were listened to because it was more convenient. Key LGBTIQ+ leaders and staff who previously delivered successful events became frustrated, upset and concerned that their raised concerns about safe event promotion fell on deaf ears, and put the young LGBTIQ+ people attending, and the event itself, at risk.

What we heard

- ▶ Those LGBTIQ+ leaders asked for input to a mainstream organisation's planned LGBTIQ+ event feeling it is tokenistic, and dismissive of their knowledge of planning, promoting and running safe LGBTIQ+ events and their safety concerns;
- ▶ LGBTIQ+ leaders, community members and those that love them describing how they weren't engaged, consulted or updated about if, when and how there would be a response from mainstream organisations, leaders and staff members following a postponement or cancellation due to anti-LGBTIQ+ hate, vilification and violence;
- ▶ There has been a different level of scrutiny and targeted and anti-LGBTIQ+ hate, vilification and violence when events are promoted for young LGBTIQ+ people and/or trans and gender diverse community;
- ▶ A downside to anti-LGBTIQ+ hate, vilification and violence in recent years, and the changes to maintaining safety and promotion of events is that less LGBTIQ+ people are hearing about, and feeling safe and OK to attend, local LGBTIQ+ events;
- ▶ Another downside to anti-LGBTIQ+ hate, vilification and violence in recent years, is that LGBTIQ+ leaders and community members are (understandably) second guessing how they plan and promote local LGBTIQ+ events;
- ▶ Mainstream organisations, leaders and staff members responding to anti-LGBTIQ+ hate, vilification and violence with silence and/or – from an LGBTIQ+ community perspective – delayed, impotent responses; and,
- ▶ Mainstream organisations, leaders and staff members telling LGBTIQ+ leaders, community members and those that love them that they don't understand how their organisation works, and that – because it requires a public statement and response – that they need to go through all of the processes, and follow policies and procedures, before anything can be done.

All stakeholders critical to the delivery of the local LGBTIQ+ event develop a **Safe LGBTIQ+ Event Promotional Plan**.

All stakeholders critical to the delivery of the local LGBTIQ+ event develop a *Safe LGBTIQ+ Event Promotional Plan* that:

- ▶ Starts with, and builds on, the input, experience and wisdom of local and regional LGBTIQ+ leaders, practitioners and community members, and regional and state-wide partners where they're not yet locally visible;
- ▶ Prioritises the safety of local LGBTIQ+ community and those attending, that is determined alongside LGBTIQ+ leaders and community members and not mainstream organisations, leaders and staff members in isolation;
- ▶ Publicly promotes and highlights the partnership between those stakeholders, rather than one mainstream organisation and/or LGBTIQ+ community in isolation;
- ▶ Supports and resources a series of timely, agreed-upon meetings to monitor and adjust promotion of the event;
- ▶ Acknowledges that, given anti-LGBTIQ+ hate, vilification and violence in recent years, that some people could be unsure or scared about attending local LGBTIQ+ events, and accounts for this through messaging about what's being done to keep everyone safe; and,
- ▶ Links closely to the *LGBTIQ+ Event (Response) Communications Plan*.

A note on community risk and safety 'appetite':

we've heard that taking an informed decision-making approach to event planning works well for many communities. For example, in event organising, clarifying what's most important to community members can help decide how an event is promoted, such as through existing, trusted connections with LGBTIQ+ community contacts if the event is for already-connected community members versus through broader channels and networks if the event is hoping to attract LGBTIQ+ community members who are not yet connected.

A note on positive, preventative and inclusive messaging:

in their NSW guide to "*Hosting LGBTQ+ Events Safely*"¹⁷, ACON helpfully suggests referring to The Common Cause Handbook¹⁸, The Pride in Prevention Messaging Guide¹⁹ and Passing the Message Stick²⁰ for guidance on the best in messaging. ACON summarises that these resources tell us communications are best when they are values-based and simple, highlight that hate groups are in the minority, and lean into solidarity and allyship.

YACVic have developed helpful safe messaging guidelines²¹ or those delivering events for young LGBTIQ+ people, as part of their approach for '*Fighting back against LGBTIQ+ discrimination*'.

Promotion tips and advice that have working for some regional and rural LGBTIQ+ events (not comprehensive):

- ▶ Don't put information about key staff and volunteers, artists or performers on promotions because they'll be targeted (and followed);
- ▶ If you put 12-25, LGBTIQ+ and drag on flyers, it's more likely to be targeted;
- ▶ Don't stop advertising widely, just stop advertising the location (they'll need to register first);
- ▶ Let local and regional LGBTIQ+ community and allies to 'spread the word' and promote the event;
- ▶ When don't know people registering, ask your LGBTIQ+ contacts and ecosystem if they're known;
- ▶ Don't post on social media unless you turn off comments or you're willing to monitor (including outside traditional business hours);
- ▶ If comments are on, hide comments as soon as they come up, blocked posters and give no reply or reaction;
- ▶ If you can't monitor, don't post OR turn off comments;
- ▶ Have non-LGBTIQ+ people to demonstrate their allyship by taking on the task of monitoring and responding, with LGBTIQ+ community-approved messaging;

PREPARE

CRITICAL FACTOR 5

DELIBERATE, GENEROUS COMMUNITY COMMUNICATION & ENGAGEMENT (Green Flags)

- ▶ Consider having people to post pre-prepared positive messaging to counterbalance any negative responses;
- ▶ Promote that Victoria Police and/or security are engaged to keep the event safe;
- ▶ No anonymous posters allowed;
- ▶ Engage and work with the administration and moderators if using public social media pages;
- ▶ Well-meaning is not enough if faced with onslaught.

As part of their presentation at the 2024 Better Together Conference, GASP! Geelong outlined a multi-layered approach to Safe Social Media Promotion of events for young LGBTIQ+ people:

- **Level One:** Public Promotion
- **Level Two:** through Schools and Youth Networks
- **Level Three:** utilising Direct Contact Lists and requiring a code word.

All stakeholders critical to the delivery of the local LGBTIQ+ event develop an **LGBTIQ+ Event (Response and Recovery) Communications Plan**.

All stakeholders critical to the delivery of the local LGBTIQ+ event develop an *LGBTIQ+ Event (Response and Recovery) Communications Plan* that:

- ▶ Follows the same foundations, builds upon and links closely with the *Safe LGBTIQ+ Event Promotional Plan* and the *Anti-LGBTIQ+ Hate, Vilification and Violence Response and Recovery Plan*;
- ▶ Outlines how the stakeholders will maintain deliberate and generous communication and engagement with each other and the LGBTIQ+ community;
- ▶ Understands that communication is best increased during times of response and crisis, rather than reduced or being non-existent;
- ▶ Assumes that whole-of-community safety, and keeping LGBTIQ+ community safe in that context, requires community leaders to be public, visible and vocal;
- ▶ Uses plain language and is accessible;

- ▶ Includes pre-prepared statements and social media posts that the mainstream organisations, its best-placed leaders and staff members will use, follow and share in a timely way to state condemnation and support for the LGBTIQ+ community in the event of pre-event and event anti-LGBTIQ+ hate, vilification and violence;
- ▶ Includes templates for letters, e-mails and telephone scripts for staff responding to pre-event anti-LGBTIQ+ hate, vilification and violence;
- ▶ Incorporates strong messaging that if LGBTIQ+ events are going ahead, that community members should demonstrate their support in the lead up, sign up as a volunteer, buy their tickets and/or come along with their family and friends; and,
- ▶ Encourages LGBTIQ+ community to connect with agreed-upon supports and resources.
- ▶ Further, LGBTIQ+ leaders, community members and those that love them have highlighted key opportunities for engagement including:
- ▶ Segmenting your messaging for specific audiences, such as: (a) LGBTIQ+ leaders; (b) LGBTIQ+ community members; (c) affected LGBTIQ+ leaders and community members; (d) concerned community; (e) well-meaning allies and supporters of local LGBTIQ+ inclusion; and,
- ▶ Providing (a) transparency about the decision-making process; (b) representation of local LGBTIQ+ community in that process; (c) clarity about why the decision was made; (d) information on available supports for impacted LGBTIQ+ community; (e) affirmation of the importance of the local LGBTIQ+ community, their events and contribution to local community; (f) commitment to run LGBTIQ+ events in the immediate future, short-term and longer-term; and, (g) details of hope/recovery; and,
- ▶ Leaving it clear to everyone: if an LGBTIQ+ event is postponed or cancelled, it's due to anti-LGBTIQ+ hate, vilification and violence and not the homo, bi and transphobia of mainstream organisations, leaders and their staff members, nor Victoria Police.

¹⁷See: <https://www.acon.org.au/what-we-are-here-for/safety-inclusion>

¹⁸See: <https://www.commoncause.com.au/common-cause-handbook>

¹⁹See: <https://rainbowhealthaustralia.org.au/news/pride-in-prevention-messaging-guide>

²⁰See: <https://passingthemessagestick.org>

²¹See: <https://www.yacvic.org.au/advocacy/fighting-back-against-lgbtiqa-discrimination>

AND NO RESPONSE



**“We’re going ahead”
no matter what.**

RESPOND

KEY FACTORS FOR ANTI-LGBTIQA+ HATE, VILIFICATION & VIOLENCE-AFFECTED COMMUNITIES

IDENTIFIED RED FLAGS IN RURAL LGBTIQA+ EVENT & COMMUNITY SAFETY			
	Is this relevant in your community?		
► Collaboration between local mainstream and LGBTIQA+ stakeholders is tokenistic, lacking or missing, and/or, mainstream stakeholders aren't providing significant, support, resourcing and allyship for LGBTIQA+ event/s.	YES	UNSURE	NO
► Local LGBTIQA+ community isn't at the heart of planning for local LGBTIQA+ events, particularly in risk and safety planning.	YES	UNSURE	NO
► A traditional, mainstream approach to event risk and safety is applied for the LGBTIQA+ event.	YES	UNSURE	NO
► There's a lack of identified roles, clear role descriptions and/or a plan for resource allocation for key stakeholders in planning for anti-LGBTIQA+ hate, vilification and violence before, during and after LGBTIQA+ events.	YES	UNSURE	NO
► There's minimal, or no, communication, engagement with and/or requests for significant input between lead mainstream stakeholders and local LGBTIQA+ community before and after an LGBTIQA+ event.	YES	UNSURE	NO

IDENTIFIED GREEN FLAGS IN RURAL LGBTIQA+ EVENT & COMMUNITY SAFETY			
	Is this relevant in your community?		
► Gather all stakeholders ASAP to fully understand their essential role in responding to anti-LGBTIQA+ hate, vilification and violence whilst keeping local LGBTIQA+ community safe.	YES	UNSURE	NO
► Take an LGBTIQA+-led and LGBTIQA+-first approach to response efforts to pre-event and event anti-LGBTIQA+ hate, vilification and violence.	YES	UNSURE	NO
► Take an LGBTIQA+-led and LGBTIQA+-first approach to risk and safety in <i>response</i> efforts.	YES	UNSURE	NO
► All critical stakeholders follow the <i>Anti-LGBTIQA+ Hate, Vilification and Violence Response and Recovery Plan</i> .	YES	UNSURE	NO
► All critical stakeholders follow the <i>LGBTIQA+ Event (Response and Recovery) Communications Plan</i> .	YES	UNSURE	NO

WHAT WE HEARD

“It WAS an emergency response”; it was quite shocking.

“If something was to happen it would be a challenge to work out who would lead the response and recovery”

“Last year police didn’t help after a drive-by yelling abuse and violent language – we had the number plate but no follow-up with us”

“It wasn’t managed well, what we faced was unique; the information from Victoria Police was overwhelming and what could have potentially happened..... The guidance was to follow Victoria Police advice”

“This community is holding on to hurt, partly because they didn’t do any debriefs. We’re mopping up the harm.”

“What’s bothered me most has been the fallout for [local and regional LGBTIQ+] partners”

“I’ve stopped letting Victoria Police and the e-Safety Commissioner know”

“All I kept thinking was the safety of the kids, basically they were hiding it and saying to them ‘hide yourselves’ – no thought to the increase in risk to them at all.”

*“Will I be ‘the problem’ if I speak up? That’s what sh*t’s me; it’s about how they look and not about us; they’re just not good at staff safety; they’re doing poorly.”*

They don’t get they’re asking us to be the public face of this, but for us, we’ve never felt this unsafe as a queer worker in country Victoria; I haven’t worn my RB jacket for months, I don’t wanna have to question that but I do; I leave work and ask ‘Am I safe?’; I don’t go out locally most nights, most days even, because I don’t feel safe.”

“What’s your plan for holding queer leaders and community members?”

“It sends an important message to [local LGBTIQ+ people]: it shows that we’re not gonna hide in the shadows, we deserve to have safe spaces and nice experiences and that we don’t have to feel scared or ashamed.”

What’s your plan for holding queer leaders and community members?

“They’re taking away events that in most situations don’t come back. It’s 12 months on and it still feels the same. We spend more time, money and do extra risk assessments and STILL think that this surely can’t happen. What happens now?”

“You being shocked by anti-LGBTIQ+ hate and vilification isn’t helpful.”

“When we do come forward with big significant concerns, they need to take it seriously, respond in a timely manner and run a risk lens over it. We approached them with concerns before the event. It wasn’t even minimised, it was silenced.”

These groups ARE going to show up. People think if they show up that event is a failure. It’s NOT.

Identified Risk Factor during events:

- ▶ Collaboration between local stakeholders is tokenistic, lacking or missing, particularly:
 - ▶ LGBTIQ+ community aren't true partners in response efforts to anti-LGBTIQ+ hate, vilification and violence, or,
 - ▶ Mainstream stakeholders aren't providing significant support, resourcing and allyship for LGBTIQ+ event/s, particularly in response efforts to anti-LGBTIQ+ hate, vilification and violence.

Example

- ▶ An organisation runs an event for a day of LGBTIQ+ significance; they invited, yet didn't involve local LGBTIQ+ community during the planning. They decide not to let local LGBTIQ+ leaders and community members know that they've been receiving social media messages and e-mails from anonymous accounts with anti-LGBTIQ+ hate and vilification, and threats. The staff member leading the event is told to cancel the event, that it's "not worth the drama" and that they can "do something else once this has all settled down".

"Council said they were 'burnt out after' and 'couldn't believe that it happened. They're all up in arms that this is still happening, not understanding that this is daily for us."

- ▶ A local LGBTIQ+ community group runs an LGBTIQ+ community event with older LGBTIQ+ people, younger LGBTIQ+ people and LGBTIQ+ people of every age in between; they couldn't get their local Council and mainstream health service to support the event beyond wishing them good luck and it was a struggle to engage local police to talk about risk and safety, and they felt dismissed. As organisers feared, during the event two dozen men with anti-LGBTIQ+ placards, shouting anti-LGBTIQ+ messages surrounded two LGBTIQ+ leaders who are on the door.

What we heard

- ▶ Mainstream organisations leading local LGBTIQ+ events not involving local LGBTIQ+ leaders, community members and those that love them in response efforts to anti-LGBTIQ+ hate, vilification and violence;
- ▶ Local LGBTIQ+ community leading local LGBTIQ+ events not being supported by mainstream organisations in their response efforts to anti-LGBTIQ+ hate, vilification and violence;
- ▶ Missed opportunities by mainstream organisations and their staff in demonstrating allyship to LGBTIQ+ community throughout the response process;
- ▶ LGBTIQ+ leaders and community members describing mainstream organisation staff members unhelpfully centring themselves when anti-LGBTIQ+ hate, vilification and violence occurs, by making it about themselves and "how you people still have this happen in this day and age", all at the expense of a focus on local LGBTIQ+ community need;
- ▶ Mainstream organisations and their staff not being open to, or taking, constructive feedback about missed allyship opportunities and how their allyship in response can be more effective;
- ▶ Challenges in engaging local and regional police when reporting anti-LGBTIQ+ hate, vilification and violence, and them not taking local LGBTIQ+ community concerns seriously; and,
- ▶ A lack of collective community understanding of local LGBTIQ+ community safety as well as the importance of LGBTIQ+ pride and visibility.

All stakeholders critical to the safety of the local LGBTIQ+ ecosystem are gathered and fully understand their essential role in responding to anti-LGBTIQ+ hate, vilification and violence whilst keeping local LGBTIQ+ community safe.

All stakeholders critical to the safety of the local LGBTIQ+ ecosystem are gathered and fully understand their essential role in responding to anti-LGBTIQ+ hate, vilification and violence whilst keeping local LGBTIQ+ community safe by:

- ▶ Assembling the 'LGBTIQ+ Safety Command Centre Room': a planned, pre-determined group of key stakeholders in the event of anti-LGBTIQ+ hate, vilification and violence that warrants critical, immediate and consequential decisions about the local LGBTIQ+ event going ahead and how to respond. Local LGBTIQ+ representation is non-negotiable; (for more on the LGBTIQ+ Safety Command Centre, see [Page 24](#)).
- ▶ Acknowledging and appreciating that this could be a challenging time for any and all LGBTIQ+ leaders, community members and those that love them;
- ▶ Ensuring all non-LGBTIQ+ stakeholders critical to the safety of the local LGBTIQ+ ecosystem demonstrate allyship and leverage their privilege as organisations and individuals; (for how best to demonstrate allyship that's informed by local LGBTIQ+ community, see [Page 18](#)).
- ▶ Understanding there might be differences between key stakeholders, and the importance of focusing on a collective reason for working together to achieve community outcomes; (for more, see [Page 17](#)).
- ▶ Following the *Anti-LGBTIQ+ Hate, Vilification and Violence Response and Recovery Plan* to confirm roles, resources and supports in Response; and, (for a reminder of pre-work, see [Page 24](#), and in Response, see [Page 42](#)).
- ▶ Following the *LGBTIQ+ Event (Response and Recovery) Communications Plan*; (for a reminder of pre-work, see [Page 31](#), and in Response go to [Page 49](#)).

A note on “lead” organisations: it's important to know in any collaboration who is the lead, or leading, organisation for the local LGBTIQ+ event.

Given the risk to events going ahead in recent years, this has become even more important. Yet, a number of communities have highlighted during operational debriefs that if they faced the same pre-event anti-LGBTIQ+ hate, vilification and violence, mainstream organisations would 'switch' lead organisation responsibilities to an LGBTIQ+ group in order to ensure the event still continued.

Noting that mainstream risk assessments can be conservative and risk-averse, staff and leaders have floated the 'switching leads' model as a consideration in their risk and safety planning.

RESPOND

CRITICAL FACTOR 2

TRUE PARTNERSHIP WITH LOCAL LGBTIQA+ COMMUNITY (Red Flags)

Identified Risk Factor during events:

- ▶ Local LGBTIQA+ community isn't at the heart of response efforts to pre-event and event anti-LGBTIQA+ hate, vilification and violence surrounding a local LGBTIQA+ event.

Example

- ▶ A council organised their IDAHOBIT flag raising, with minimal, tokenistic input from local LGBTIQA+ community based only on what a heterosexual, cis Council worker felt he needed for his risk mitigation strategy. After anti-LGBTIQA+ hate, vilification and violence, the Council decides they'll do a 'Council staff only' event for internal purposes, and LGBTIQA+ community are disinvited. Local LGBTIQA+ leaders, as volunteers, respond to the fall out that Council does not see, and support disinvited community members who are upset, angry and worried. They also hold their own feelings of being upset, frustrated and concerned.

What we heard

- ▶ Mainstream organisations responding to pre-event anti-LGBTIQA+ hate, vilification and violence in isolation with minimal, tokenistic or no input from local LGBTIQA+ community;
- ▶ Missed opportunities by mainstream organisations and their staff in demonstrating allyship to LGBTIQA+ community in response efforts to anti-LGBTIQA+ hate, vilification and violence;
- ▶ LGBTIQA+ leaders and community members describing mainstream organisation staff members unhelpfully centring themselves when anti-LGBTIQA+ hate, vilification and violence occurs, by making it about themselves and "how you people still have this happen in this day and age", all at the expense of a focus on local LGBTIQA+ community need
- ▶ Mainstream organisations and their staff not being open to, or taking, constructive feedback about missed allyship opportunities and how their allyship can be more effective;

- ▶ Mainstream organisations, their leaders and staff members not factoring in the community impact of the postponement or cancellation of LGBTIQA+ events;
- ▶ A lack of clarity and/or adequate documentation about who leads in key decision-making for LGBTIQA+ events; and,
- ▶ LGBTIQA+ events and related activities not being altered significantly to account for safety concerns despite local LGBTIQA+ intelligence and advice; and,
- ▶ A lack of acknowledgment or appreciation for the load, or weight, of LGBTIQA+ identity and burden carried by LGBTIQA+ leaders and community members when events are postponed or cancelled.
- ▶ LGBTIQA+ people are not central to the decision-making process for whether an LGBTIQA+ event goes ahead, is postponed or cancelled.
- ▶ Some key LGBTIQA+ groups leaders and community members describing finding out about the local LGBTIQA+ event only after a mainstream organisation postponed it, and then being unfairly targeted and blamed for that postponement by LGBTIQA+ leaders and community members from outside their community, including in Melbourne; and,
- ▶ Mainstream organisations, leaders and staff members dismissing, downplaying or trivialising anti-LGBTIQA+ hate, vilification and violence:

*"It's nothing, just some d**kheads"*

Taking an LGBTIQA+-led and LGBTIQA+-first approach to response efforts to pre-event and event anti-LGBTIQA+ hate, vilification and violence, ensuring local LGBTIQA+ leaders, community members and those that love them are true partners that feel safe, supported, welcome and included.

All stakeholders critical to the safety of the local LGBTIQA+ ecosystem take an LGBTIQA+-led and LGBTIQA+-first approach to responding to pre-event and event anti-LGBTIQA+ hate, vilification and violence, by:

- ▶ Building on the foundations of already working alongside LGBTIQA+ community in the planning process to determine the best, and safest, outcomes for the LGBTIQA+ community;
- ▶ Ensuring local LGBTIQA+ leaders, community members and those that love them are true partners that feel safe, supported, welcome and included, with time and trust invested into the significant sharing four key partnership factors: information, resources, decision-making and 'territory'; (for more, see [Page 21](#))
- ▶ Keeping local LGBTIQA+ community centred in following *Anti-LGBTIQA+ Hate, Vilification and Violence Response and Recovery Plan* to confirm roles, resources and supports in response; and, (for a reminder of pre-work, see [Page 27](#), and in Response, see [Page 42](#))
- ▶ Keeping local LGBTIQA+ community centred in following the *LGBTIQA+ Event (Response and Recovery) Communications Plan*; (for a reminder of pre-work, see [Page 31](#), and in response go to [Page 49](#))

And it's worth repeating what has already been described:

- ▶ Acknowledging and appreciating that this could be a challenging time for any and all LGBTIQA+ leaders, community members and those that love them;
- ▶ Ensuring all non-LGBTIQA+ stakeholders critical to the safety of the local LGBTIQA+ ecosystem demonstrate allyship and leverage their privilege as organisations and individuals; (for how best to demonstrate allyship that's informed by local LGBTIQA+ community, see [Page 18](#))

A note on healthy LGBTIQA+ community descent:

in our operational debriefs with postponement and cancellation-affected communities, we heard that some of the lasting impact for LGBTIQA+ leaders and community members was that they didn't have any input into decision making.

In those cases, hurt and harm occurred because they were not asked what they thought could and should happen in response to anti-LGBTIQA+ hate, vilification and violence, and if it's safe to go ahead.

Time and again we heard that they could understand if there was a collective decision to postpone or cancel, yet what still hurt was not having a chance to have their say, plead their case for continuing and offering an alternative perspective to the event's safety and viability.

RESPOND

CRITICAL FACTOR 3

TAKE AN LGBTIQ+-FIRST & LGBTIQ+-LED APPROACH TO RISK & SAFETY (Red Flags)

Identified Risk Factor during events:

- ▶ A traditional, mainstream approach to event risk and safety, and response efforts to hate, vilification and violence is applied for the LGBTIQ+ event.

Example

- ▶ A Council has faced anti-LGBTIQ+ hate, vilification and violence in the lead up to an event for young LGBTIQ+ people. Council staff seek advice from Victoria Police, and subsequently conduct “emergency response” discussions about whether to postpone or cancel the event with only senior Council staff and Victoria Police in attendance.

Later staff said that they couldn’t decide, and someone came up with a tiebreak question:

*“Would we put our kids into the same situation?
That’s where we fell in the end.”*

“It wasn’t managed well, what we faced was unique; information from Victoria Police was overwhelming, with what could’ve potentially happened....The guidance to me was to follow Victoria Police advice.”

The event was postponed; community is still waiting for the rescheduled event two years on.

What we heard

- ▶ Mainstream organisations and leaders making decisions about risk and safety that they believe are best for LGBTIQ+ communities independent of LGBTIQ+ community;
- ▶ Missed opportunities by mainstream organisations and their staff in demonstrating allyship to LGBTIQ+ community throughout response;
- ▶ Mainstream organisations putting organisational concerns before risk to LGBTIQ+ community through postponements and cancellations;
- ▶ Mainstream organisations not factoring in the current climate of anti-LGBTIQ+ hate, vilification and violence nor the community impact of (postponements and) cancellations;

- ▶ Mainstream organisations and Victoria Police missing opportunities by ignoring, dismissing or not seeking out the safety intelligence and guidance from local LGBTIQ+ community in response efforts (and thus missing opportunities to maximise community safety). This includes the doxing²² of LGBTIQ+ leaders, performers and key staff;
- ▶ LGBTIQ+ leaders and community members describing mainstream organisation staff members unhelpfully centring themselves when anti-LGBTIQ+ hate, vilification and violence occurs, by making it about themselves and “how you people still have this happen in this day and age”, all at the expense of a focus on local LGBTIQ+ community need; and,
- ▶ Mainstream organisations and their staff not being open to, or taking, constructive feedback about missed allyship opportunities and how their allyship in response can be more effective.
- ▶ Mainstream organisations and leaders telling LGBTIQ+ leaders and community members of their surprise and shock that there is anti-LGBTIQ+ hate, vilification and violence;
- ▶ LGBTIQ+ community questioning Council reasoning for cancellations:

“It feels like we matter less than Council’s risk assessment”;

- ▶ Mainstream organisations, particularly Councils, stating *“we’ve had to cancel on police advice”* whilst Victoria Police states *“We’re not here to tell events not to go ahead”*.

²² Doxing (or doxxing) is the intentional online exposure of an individual’s identity, private information or personal details without their consent with the intent of causing harm.
<https://www.esafety.gov.au/industry/tech-trends-and-challenges/doxing>

Taking an LGBTIQ+-led and LGBTIQ+-first approach to risk and safety in response efforts to pre-event and event anti-LGBTIQ+ hate, vilification and violence, ensuring local LGBTIQ+ leaders, community members and those that love them are essential partners in keeping events happening and safe with maximum community impact.

All stakeholders critical to the delivery of the local LGBTIQ+ event take an LGBTIQ+-led approach to risk and safety in response efforts by:

- ▶ Centring and privileging LGBTIQ+ community intelligence and guidance in response efforts; and,
- ▶ Recognising that local LGBTIQ+ community are experts in their safety, and that mainstream organisations, Victoria Police and allies cannot tell them if they are feeling safe or not. (for more on an LGBTIQ+-led approach, see [Page 21](#))

All stakeholders critical to the delivery of the local LGBTIQ+ event take an LGBTIQ+-first approach to risk and safety in response efforts by:

- ▶ Starting with the assumption that the event will go ahead, unless a decision is made otherwise in true collaboration with local LGBTIQ+ community;
- ▶ Understanding the profoundly negative impact of postponing and cancelling of LGBTIQ+ events has on LGBTIQ+ community, and that this can be downplayed, dismissed and/or ignored by mainstream organisations, leaders and the broader community;
- ▶ Recognising that anti-LGBTIQ+ hate, vilification and violence can lead to LGBTIQ+-last, emotional and reactive responses, and subsequent postponements and cancellations that could be unnecessary; and,
- ▶ Making a commitment to local LGBTIQ+ leaders and community members that decisions about the event being altered, postponed or cancelled will not be made without their input. (for more on this, decision-making and risk, see [Page 23](#))

Additionally, this is ideally underpinned by the *Anti-LGBTIQ+ Hate, Vilification and Violence Response and Recovery Plan* that includes:

- ▶ An LGBTIQ+ community-first decision-making process;
- ▶ Well-run scenarios of anti-LGBTIQ+ hate, vilification and violence; and,
- ▶ An assembled 'LGBTIQ+ Safety Command Centre'. (for more on this plan, see [Page 24](#))

A note on decision-making that could be homo, bi or transphobic: with the rise in anti-LGBTIQ+ hate, vilification and violence in recent years and increasing scrutiny on LGBTIQ+ events, it's fair and reasonable to question whether there are times that events are postponed or cancelled by mainstream organisations simply due to homo, bi and transphobia. These examples exist, including where LGBTIQ+ events must jump through hoops that non-LGBTIQ+ events don't.

It could be useful to assess when something is homo, bi or transphobic with guidance from the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission (VEOHRC)²³.

The most important elements to determine discrimination are:

- Has the discrimination occurred in an area of public life?
- Does the person actually, or assumed to, have one of the characteristics protected under the law, such as sexual orientation, gender identity or disability?
- Does the experience involve some unfair, or 'less favourable', treatment such as discrimination or harassment?

If in doubt there is a good chance that it probably is homo, bi or transphobia. It's like the old duck analogy: if it walks like LGBTIQ+ resistance, looks like homo, bi and transphobia and quacks like LGBTIQ+ resistance, chances are it's homo, bi or transphobia. This holds true even if others think you are being oversensitive, politically correct or if they 'didn't mean it'.

²³Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission www.humanrightscommission.vic.gov.au

RESPOND

CRITICAL FACTOR 4

ROLE CLARITY IN PREPARATION, RESPONSE & RECOVERY (Red Flags)

Identified Risk Factor during events:

- ▶ There's a lack of role descriptions and/or clarity of roles of key stakeholders in response efforts, and a lack of a plan for the allocation of resources and support for LGBTIQ+ community in the event of pre-event and event anti-LGBTIQ+ hate, vilification and violence.

Example

- ▶ A mainstream organisation runs an LGBTIQ+ event which attracts online anti-LGBTIQ+ hate, vilification and violence, and daily phone calls and an e-mail. After talking with Victoria Police, they decide to postpone the event without input from local LGBTIQ+ community.

After announcing the postponement to registered attendees, they're not sure if they should check in on local LGBTIQ+ community so they don't, assuming that if they weren't OK that they'd reach out to them. No resources or supports are offered, allocated or coordinated by Mainstream Organisation F, and local LGBTIQ+ leaders, community members and those that love them feel, upset confused and frustrated.

LGBTIQ+ leaders, as volunteers, step up to support the unseen aftermath of anti-LGBTIQ+ hate, vilification and violence.

What we heard

- ▶ LGBTIQ+ leaders, community members and those that love them describing that they (understandably) reacted more than they responded to anti-LGBTIQ+ hate, vilification and violence;
- ▶ LGBTIQ+ leaders, community members and those that love them describing how they weren't engaged, consulted or updated about if, when and how there would be a response from mainstream organisations, leaders and staff members;
- ▶ Mainstream organisations, leaders and staff members not responding, or having a significant delay in response, to anti-LGBTIQ+ hate, vilification and violence– from an LGBTIQ+ community perspective;
- ▶ Response efforts to anti-LGBTIQ+ hate, vilification and violence by mainstream organisations leading local LGBTIQ+ events not involving being absent, minimal or tone-deaf;
- ▶ An absence of an allocation of resources and support for LGBTIQ+ community in response and recovery to anti-LGBTIQ+ hate, vilification and violence;
- ▶ A lack of LGBTIQ+-safe, time-critical and trauma-informed support offered to LGBTIQ+ leaders and community members impacted by anti-LGBTIQ+ hate, vilification and violence;
- ▶ No operational debrief conducted with key stakeholders in events impacted by anti-LGBTIQ+ hate, vilification and violence;, especially LGBTIQ+ leaders and community members; and,
- ▶ One example of community leaders being referred to a mainstream EAP provider following them experiencing in-community anti-LGBTIQ+ violence. The mainstream EAP provider listened to LGBTIQ+ leader, apologised, saying that it wasn't in their area of expertise, and wished them well in finding alternative support.

RESPOND

CRITICAL FACTOR 4

ROLE CLARITY IN PREPARATION, RESPONSE & RECOVERY (Green Flags)

All stakeholders critical to the delivery of the local LGBTIQ+ event to follow the *Anti-LGBTIQ+ Hate, Vilification and Violence Response and Recovery Plan* in the event of anti-LGBTIQ+ hate, vilification and violence, focusing on roles, resources and support for LGBTIQ+ community.

All stakeholders critical to the delivery of the local LGBTIQ+ event to follow the *Anti-LGBTIQ+ Hate, Vilification and Violence Response and Recovery Plan*, by:

- ▶ Utilising an LGBTIQ+ community-first decision-making process;
- ▶ Preparing ahead of time by running scenarios of anti-LGBTIQ+ hate, vilification and violence; and,
- ▶ Assembling an 'LGBTIQ+ Safety Command Centre' (for more on this plan, see [Page 24](#))

Additionally, all stakeholders critical to the delivery of the local LGBTIQ+ event to follow the *Anti-LGBTIQ+ Hate, Vilification and Violence Response and Recovery Plan*, including:

- ▶ Key stakeholders filling pre-determined, agreed-upon roles;
- ▶ Engaging, consulting with and updating key LGBTIQ+ leaders and community members of response and recovery efforts; and,
- ▶ Co-ordinating pre-determined, agreed-upon resources and supporting key LGBTIQ+ leaders and community members in response and recovery;
- ▶ Engaging LGBTIQ+ leaders and community members to check in and offer options for support on the day, in the days after and one week after pre-event and/or event anti-LGBTIQ+ hate, vilification and violence; Proactively checking with key LGBTIQ+ leaders and community members to ensure resources and supports are actually LGBTIQ+-safe, LGBTIQ+-inclusive and trauma-informed; and,
- ▶ Supporting key LGBTIQ+ leaders and community members to support more isolated, less engaged members of the LGBTIQ+ community.

A note on local LGBTIQ+ community and gatekeeping:

it's important to involve LGBTIQ+ leaders in response efforts, yet not at the expense of engaging LGBTIQ+ community more broadly. We've heard reports from some communities that some LGBTIQ+ leaders and groups have presented themselves as representative leaders, yet acted as gatekeepers in informing and/or representing all local LGBTIQ+ community. Similarly we've heard some mainstream organisations deciding which local LGBTIQ+ leaders they'll inform, support and resource.

A note on reporting: In Rural Pride Australia's Rural LGBTIQ+ Community Safety Survey, only one-quarter of respondents had a pathway for reporting anti-LGBTIQ+ hate and vilification in regional and rural communities, highlighting their local LGBTIQ+ community/group, their own mainstream organisation or Victoria Police (including LLOs) as options.

Almost half of the respondents reported not knowing, or being unsure, of any supports to access after incidents of local anti-LGBTIQ+ hate and vilification. Some respondents echoed what Rural Pride Australia has heard in the last 18 months across the state: LGBTIQ+ leaders and community are left supporting their own community after incidents of local anti-LGBTIQ+ hate and vilification, often as volunteers.

At the time of writing, there is no uniform reporting tool nor central data collection agency in Victoria for anti-LGBTIQ+ hate, vilification and violence.

RESPOND

CRITICAL FACTOR 4

ROLE CLARITY IN PREPARATION, RESPONSE & RECOVERY (Green Flags)

In the absence of a central, LGBTIQ+ safe reporting option in Victoria, consider these reporting portals and safety resources:

Victoria Police: www.police.vic.gov.au/report-crime-against-LGBTIQ-community

- ▶ Crime Stoppers www.crimestoppersvic.com.au
- ▶ E-Safety Commission www.esafety.gov.au/report
- ▶ Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission's (VEOHRC) reporting tool:
- ▶ www.humanrights.vic.gov.au/get-help/community-reporting-tool. Did You Know? This can also be added to your own websites.
- ▶ Department of Justice and Community Safety (DJCS) and their work in Protecting Crowded Spaces: www.justice.vic.gov.au/cveunit#protecting-crowded-places

Reporting is important. Why? We know that LGBTIQ+ people, like other population groups, underreport crimes against them. Some of the reasons given include that reporting can take considerable trust in the reporting process, energy and/or personal risk. Reporting matters because we matter. Our experiences matter, and so does our safety. Getting a clearer picture of our experiences of safety and crime is essential in understanding improving our safety wherever we live in Victoria.

We know that often LGBTIQ+ community can share their experiences of crime with their own first, especially community leaders. Did you know you can report on behalf of a friend, loved one or community member? You could report as an 'authorised person'. If you feel safe and OK to do so, please consider the reporting options outlined.

One example of the deliberate use of authorised reporting comes from locals in Surf Coast Shire. After the distribution of transphobic flyers locally, one community member supported individuals to contribute their experiences to a 'group' report that went to local police and allowed community members to remain anonymous if they were not 'out'.

Remember to consider the supports offered throughout this resource; supporting you can help the LGBTIQ+ people you support.

A SUGGESTED, LGBTIQ+-INFORMED LOCAL RESPONSE

Through funding for this project Rural Pride Australia was able to provide what affected and impacted LGBTIQ+ leaders and community members identified as missing: (1) a series of immediate LGBTIQ+ safe and trauma-informed counselling support; and, (2) in-community operational debriefs with key stakeholders. This has helped inform the identification of key pieces of work in Response:

- ▶ Immediate Response;
 - ▶ LGBTIQ+ Safe, Trauma-Informed Support (could include counselling);
 - ▶ LGBTIQ+ Safe, Trauma-Informed Operational Debrief & Group Supervision;
 - ▶ LGBTIQ+ Community Gathering and Care; and,
 - ▶ Local and Regional LGBTIQ+ Capacity Building.
- Yet first, some key quotes that helped inform our understanding of the need:

"What community needs right now is for someone to show up, and to meet them and be open, honest, vulnerable. That's what's needed, not people being defensive."

"In a small place like this, it helps knowing that people are willing to show up for the LGBTIQ+ community and that they're there for them."

"We need them to show their allies by sitting in the discomfort with us. It'll feel inconvenient."

"It's human nature to feel like it's personalised."

"I can't imagine, I won't be able to completely understand, but I'd like to begin to..."

"Thanks to [Rural Pride Australia] this is the first time I've been offered safe counselling and support as someone in queer leadership."

"I need to be with people who get it – to hear it happened, acknowledge it's hard, that there's nothing we can do BUT that we're still committed to the work, them, this."

"I need [allies] to let me know 'we will fight and do more.'"

THREE STORIES OF RESPONSE HOPE (PLUS ONE)

MILD MANNERED PARKING ATTENDANT

After an evening gathering for young LGBTIQ+ people, a worker was followed by a man and confronted as she reached the local carpark. He started screaming anti-LGBTIQ+ hate at the worker, calling her a p*d*phile and telling her to *“leave these kids alone”*.

“Do you know that people walked past whilst this was happening and not one person stopped? He was in my face screaming. I didn’t know if he was gonna punch me.”

Observing this, a car park attendant stepped in. The worker only found out later that he was a former policeman. She says he’s the most supportive person she’s ever had in a challenging situation.

“He asked, ‘Are you OK, where are you going, I’m coming with you to level 3 and drove down to the exit with me’. He got out and asked, ‘Do you have someone at home, call your husband and stay on the phone all the way home.’ He got my phone number to make sure I got home and checked in a few days later. Work gave me an emergency device, but I’m still on high alert.”

COUNCIL GRAFFITI REMOVAL

It was event day, and as the sun rose, two LGBTIQ+ leaders and event organisers went for a drive to get coffee. They decided to do a drive-by of the event venue, discovering nearby billboards, event signage put up the night before and walls had been spray painted *“with nasty stuff we couldn’t let community see”*.

On a weekend, well before everyday business hours, the local Council was called. Within 45 minutes Council staff were there to clean up. *“They were so quick, it was crazy!”*

What struck the two LGBTIQ+ leaders was not only the efficiency of Council workers, but also their care and kindness in what was a challenging moment. From there, everything reportedly went smoothly.

“I knew there’d be a thing and I was waiting for the thing so it was almost a relief, ok, that’s it. We ended up having the most awesome day, and no one there would know.”

RESPONSE TO WANGARATTA POSTPONEMENT

In a deliberate, rural-focused response to a rise in anti-LGBTIQ+/trans and gender diverse attacks, including targeting and the subsequent cancellation of the North East Rainbow Ball, a partnership response was developed to support impacted LGBTIQ+ communities in Shepparton and Wangaratta.

Combining resources, expertise and time, Uniting Vic.Tas, Rural Pride Australia, The Aware Project, The Diversity Project Shepparton, GV Pride, Thorne Harbour Country and LINE Wangaratta delivered a workshop in Shepparton and community-building events for Wangaratta were planned in partnership with local Pride Networks. (see Appendix F)

HAVING RATE PAYER FUN

One Council in a diversity role encourages customer service officers to put through anyone complaining about local LGBTIQ+ events and work by the Council. *“I have fun with it. I ask, ‘What’s your name? Let me just check. No, your rates are not paying for this. Is there anything else I can help you with?’ I mean, if it gets nasty we can then escalate it, but mostly people want to get it off their chest.”*

RESPOND

CRITICAL FACTOR 4

ROLE CLARITY IN PREPARATION, RESPONSE & RECOVERY (Green Flags)

Immediate Response

As soon as is reasonably possible for mainstream and LGBTIQ+ organisations, their leaders and staff members to work together to:

- ▶ Ensure everyone is safe from immediate harm;
- ▶ Consider ways that you can acknowledge and temporarily put to one side your own understandable reactions and discomfort, and focus on the immediate and short-term needs of impacted LGBTIQ+ leaders and community members;
- ▶ Reach out to key LGBTIQ+ leaders, community members and those that love them;
- ▶ Know that impacted LGBTIQ+ leaders and community members could understandably be distraught, distressed and dysregulated²⁴;
- ▶ Understand that LGBTIQ+ people experience LGBTIQ+ events, threats on them and postponements differently to non-LGBTIQ+ people;
- ▶ Acknowledge:
 - it happened
 - it was serious
 - it was not OK
 - it was a hate crime that was perpetrated against an LGBTIQ+ person or people
 - it impacted
 - this needs attention, care and support
 - they are the experts in their own safety and what support they need
- ▶ Inform impacted local LGBTIQ+ leaders and community members of their options for immediate and short-term support at a local, regional and state-wide level, understanding these might not be taken up immediately, yet encourage help-seeking;
- ▶ Alert state-wide LGBTIQ+ leadership of what's happened, including the office of the Minister for Equality, the office of the Commissioner for LGBTIQ+ Communities, the Equality Branch at the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing and state-wide LGBTIQ+ services and organisations (see resources); and,
- ▶ Alert other key mainstream stakeholders of the need to come together (see Response).

A note on debriefing: better disaster recovery practice encourages non-negotiable “hot” (immediately following shifts and activations) and “cold” (weeks following response efforts) debriefs to normalise debriefing and removing any stigma associated with it. We’ve heard Rainbow Community Angels do this debrief process well.

LGBTIQ+-Safe, Trauma-Informed Counselling Support

As soon as is reasonably possible for mainstream and LGBTIQ+ organisations, their leaders and staff members to work together to:

- ▶ Arrange timely, LGBTIQ+-safe and trauma-informed counselling support to impacted local LGBTIQ+ leaders and community members for them to understand: (a) the impact on them; and, (b) what they need;
- ▶ Offer options for impacted local LGBTIQ+ leaders and community members to access anonymous, confidential supports at a local, regional and state level, including Switchboard Victoria;
- ▶ To that end, working to establish and maintain relationships with LGBTIQ+ and allied support organisations is easier before that support is required; and,
- ▶ Check in over the following days and weeks to ensure supports have been safe, appropriate and what is needed.

²⁴“Emotional dysregulation occurs when you constantly find it difficult to manage or control your emotions (fear, disgust, anger, surprise, joy, and sadness) when they show up. This causes you to be stressed and constantly overwhelmed.” www.australiacounselling.com.au/emotional-dysregulation-how-to-manage-your-emotions

RESPOND

CRITICAL FACTOR 4

ROLE CLARITY IN PREPARATION, RESPONSE & RECOVERY (Green Flags)

Operational Debrief & Group Supervision

Gather key stakeholders critical to the local LGBTIQ+ ecosystem and its events as soon as is reasonably possible to conduct an operational debrief and group supervision that:

- ▶ Is professional, LGBTIQ+-Safe and Trauma-Informed;
- ▶ Establishes an agreement on how best to work together that keeps LGBTIQ+ people safe and centred in the discussion;
- ▶ Starts and ends with key LGBTIQ+ leaders and community members;
- ▶ Seeks to understand what happened and the best language to describe it;
- ▶ Unpacks what happened Before, During and After;
- ▶ Documents the lessons from this experience (at this point in time);
- ▶ Name lateral violence as one potential response to anti-LGBTIQ+ hate, vilification and violence;
- ▶ Asks about what the next best steps could be for them as individuals, for the local LGBTIQ+ community and the broader community, including LGBTIQ+ community collective care;
- ▶ Includes options for fully-informed reporting of anti-LGBTIQ+ hate, vilification and violence;
- ▶ Plans for how mainstream organisations, leaders and its staff members show up for local LGBTIQ+ community in ways that are meaningful for them (clue: if you don't know, ask them);
- ▶ Continues to encourage help-seeking; and,
- ▶ Checks in with everyone to make sure they're safe and OK to leave.

LGBTIQ+ Community Gathering and Care

As soon as is reasonably possible for LGBTIQ+ leaders, community members and those that love them to come together, supported by mainstream organisations, to:

- ▶ Establish an agreement on how best to work together that keeps people safe from lateral violence;
- ▶ Name lateral violence as one potential response to anti-LGBTIQ+ hate, vilification and violence;
- ▶ Seek to understand their experiences and the best language to describe it;
- ▶ Unpack what has happened;
- ▶ Asks about what the next best steps could be for them as individuals, for the local LGBTIQ+ community and the broader community, including LGBTIQ+ community collective care;
- ▶ Understand what collective care does and could look like for them;
- ▶ Includes options for fully-informed reporting of anti-LGBTIQ+ hate, vilification and violence;
- ▶ Continues to encourage help-seeking; and,
- ▶ Checks in with everyone to make sure they're safe and OK to leave.

Local and Regional LGBTIQ+ Capacity Building

As soon as is reasonably possible for mainstream and LGBTIQ+ organisations, their leaders and staff members to work together to:

- ▶ To deliver a focused response, such as the response to the cancellation of the North East Rainbow Ball (Appendix A); and,
- ▶ To connect impacted LGBTIQ+ leaders and community members with peers who've experienced similar anti-LGBTIQ+ hate, vilification and violence who can provide strengths-based support; (contact RPA's State-wide Rural LGBTIQ+ Community of Practice).

A Note on State-wide LGBTIQ+ Organisations, Services and Leaders

Although Victoria's state-wide LGBTIQ+ organisations, services, groups, lobbies and leaders provide many good examples of support, resourcing and solidarity with regional and rural LGBTIQ+ communities, there's also too many challenges.

Alongside support, resourcing and solidarity, we also heard:

*"F**k no. If they'd been here, it would've escalated things. It really concerns me."*

"We let them know and they breached local confidentiality and shared it."

*"State-wides? Where the f**k were you? You failed us!"*

"I had [metro-based state-wide services and leaders] targeting us thinking we were a part of the postponement. The Council didn't even involve us in the planning; we found out when everyone else did but were blamed for the whole thing."

"They travel. They get to go home to the city, we have to stay here and deal with the aftermath, sometimes their aftermath; and it doesn't matter how much training you have."

"I feel like [people from outside this community] contact us for the goss, thrive off the drama and then breach our confidentiality."

"They're actually amplifying and inflaming it. It's ineffective."

"They make it about them."

*"I don't remember us being clear we wanted it to go ahead. It felt like they said, 'F**k it, we're coming'. It felt like they didn't check with us, so we just reacted to that confusion and fear and unknown. We turned up, BUT is that a situation I wanted to put myself in?"*

"They came, it went ahead but it didn't feel like a triumph. Them, everyone else who didn't live here told us it was a success, and telling a story about how it was for us and how we felt."

Suggestions for how state-wide organisations, services, leaders, counterprotesting groups and other regional and rural groups could best demonstrate support, resourcing and solidarity:

- Reach out to offer support, resourcing and solidarity; we need it and you;
- Please check with us about what we need and when, don't just "swoop in";
- Reflect whether your response is motivated by care and compassion for local community members and what they need, rather than how you feel about the situation;
- Above all else, we need calm, clear and community;
- Do offer to come when it's best for us; we do need peers to come to our region from Melbourne and other regions, showing up, being visible, giving hugs - real human connection; and,
- Work with us before taking aim at local mainstream leaders, groups and organisations on social media (and in the media); there's real risk that you're making it even less safe and OK for local LGBTIQ+ leaders and community members.

RESPOND

CRITICAL FACTOR 5

DELIBERATE, GENEROUS COMMUNITY COMMUNICATION & ENGAGEMENT (Red Flags)

Identified Risk Factor during events:

- ▶ There's minimal, or no, communication, engagement with and/or requests for significant input between lead mainstream stakeholders and local LGBTIQ+ community in response to pre-event and event anti-LGBTIQ+ hate, vilification and violence.

Example

- ▶ A council plans an LGBTIQ+ event for young LGBTIQ+ people for a day of LGBTIQ+ significance. The event is postponed because of online anti-LGBTIQ+ hate, vilification and threats of violence. The decision is made in a meeting between senior Council staff and Victoria Police. Local LGBTIQ+ community are not consulted or represented in this meeting.

Local and regional LGBTIQ+ community is not consulted or engaged by the council in its response. It contacts all of parents, guardians or caregivers of the young LGBTIQ+ people who registered for the event to let them know the event is postponed. Given anecdotal and research evidence, every youth worker interviewed, without exception said this would've led to family conflict, homelessness and, possibly, death by suicide.

After an initial statement announcing the postponement, LGBTIQ+ leaders, community members and those that love them described there was a "deafening silence". Given a lack of transparency, local and regional LGBTIQ+ leaders and community members question how and why the decision was made, and still wonder if the decision was made because of homo, bi and transphobia. Local LGBTIQ+ leaders and community members – who were never engaged or consulted – fill the void, take on the burden of supporting community as volunteers and get criticism and occasional hate from LGBTIQ+ community locally, regionally and from Melbourne.

Two years later, the event has not been rescheduled. One LGBTIQ+ youth worker said, *"We've missed our chance at redemption, the triumph over that hate."*

What we heard

- ▶ Mainstream organisations, leaders and staff members responding to anti-LGBTIQ+ hate, vilification and violence with silence and/or – from an LGBTIQ+ community perspective – delayed, impotent responses;

- ▶ LGBTIQ+ leaders, community members and those that love them describing how they weren't engaged, consulted or updated about if, when and how there would be a response from mainstream organisations, leaders and staff members following a postponement or cancellation due to anti-LGBTIQ+ hate, vilification and violence, as well as how they could assist in safe, supportive messaging and engagement with LGBTIQ+ community;
- ▶ In post-postponement and cancellation communications, there is an absence, lack and/or minimal: (a) transparency about the decision-making process; (b) representation of local LGBTIQ+ community in that process; (c) clarity about why the decision was made; (d) information on available supports for impacted LGBTIQ+ community; (e) affirmation of the importance of the local LGBTIQ+ community, their events and contribution to local community; (f) commitment to run LGBTIQ+ events in the immediate future, short-term and longer-term; and, (g) details of recovery.
- ▶ LGBTIQ+ leaders, community members and those that love them questioning if the planned LGBTIQ+ event was postponed or cancelled because of the mainstream organisation, and Victoria Police's, homo, bi and transphobia;
- ▶ LGBTIQ+ and allied staff members in mainstream organisations being silent, or silenced, feeling scared to speak up about preparation of LGBTIQ+ events and/or the response/s to anti-LGBTIQ+ hate, vilification and violence fearing ramifications for their own employment, the continuation of LGBTIQ+ work and/or future LGBTIQ+ events;
- ▶ Mainstream organisations not looking after LGBTIQ+ staff members through the preparation of LGBTIQ+ events and/or response/s to anti-LGBTIQ+ hate, vilification and violence;
- ▶ "Benevolent dictator" CEOs, leaders and staff members of mainstream organisations centring themselves in decision-making and response efforts to pre-event and event anti-LGBTIQ+ hate, vilification and violence: "They'll say you're not alone and we have your back, but only if and when it suits them at a photo op"; and,
- ▶ Mainstream organisations, leaders and staff members telling LGBTIQ+ leaders, community members and those that love them that they don't understand how their organisation works, and that – because it requires a public statement and response – that they need to go through all of the processes, and follow policies and procedures, before anything can be done.

All stakeholders critical to the delivery of the local LGBTIQ+ event follow their *LGBTIQ+ Event (Response) Communications Plan*.

All stakeholders critical to the delivery of the local LGBTIQ+ event follow their *LGBTIQ+ Event (Response and Recovery) Communications Plan* that:

- ▶ Builds on the input, experience and wisdom of local and regional LGBTIQ+ leaders, practitioners and community members;
- ▶ Prioritises the safety of local LGBTIQ+ community and those attending, that is determined alongside LGBTIQ+ community and not mainstream organisations, leaders and staff members in isolation;
- ▶ Publicly highlights and affirms the partnership between those stakeholders, rather than one mainstream organisation and/or LGBTIQ+ community in isolation;
- ▶ Links closely with the *Anti-LGBTIQ+ Hate, Vilification and Violence Response and Recovery Plan*;
- ▶ Outlines how the stakeholders will maintain deliberate and generous communication and engagement with each other and the community;
- ▶ Assumes that whole-of-community safety, and keeping LGBTIQ+ community safe in that context, requires community leaders to be public, visible and vocal;
- ▶ Utilises pre-prepared statements and social media posts that the mainstream organisations, its best-placed leaders and staff members use, follow and share in a timely way to state condemnation and support for the LGBTIQ+ community in the event of pre-event and event anti-LGBTIQ+ hate, vilification and violence;
- ▶ Utilises templates for letters, e-mails and telephone scripts for staff responding to concerned LGBTIQ+ community, and any community using further anti-LGBTIQ+ hate, vilification and violence; and,
- ▶ Encourages LGBTIQ+ community to connect with agreed-upon supports and resources. (For more on this Plan, see [Page 27](#))

Further, LGBTIQ+ leaders, community members and those that love them have highlighted key opportunities for engagement including:

- ▶ Segmenting your messaging for specific audiences, such as: (a) LGBTIQ+ leaders; (b) LGBTIQ+ community members; (c) affected LGBTIQ+ leaders and community members; (d) concerned community; (e) well-meaning allies and supporters of local LGBTIQ+ inclusion; and,
- ▶ Providing (a) transparency about the decision-making process; (b) representation of local LGBTIQ+ community in that process; (c) clarity about why the decision was made; (d) information on available supports for impacted LGBTIQ+ community; (e) affirmation of the importance of the local LGBTIQ+ community, their events and contribution to local community; (f) commitment to run LGBTIQ+ events in the immediate future, short-term and longer-term; and, (g) details of hope/recovery; and,
- ▶ Leaving it clear to everyone: if an LGBTIQ+ event is postponed or cancelled, it's due to anti-LGBTIQ+ hate, vilification and violence and not the homo, bi and transphobia of mainstream organisations, leaders and their staff members, nor Victoria Police.

Additionally, engage key LGBTIQ+ leaders in the event of pre-event or event anti-LGBTIQ+ hate, vilification and violence:

- ▶ Ensure LGBTIQ+ leaders have statements and key messages so that they can be part of the communication and engagement to local and regional LGBTIQ+ community, ensuring messages get to audiences you might not already have contact with; and,
- ▶ Support LGBTIQ+ leaders who will play the role of bridging their own personal hurt and frustration, whilst still communicating to a potentially upset, scared and/or angry community.

RECOGNITION

“Taking back our pride”

RECOVER

Key factors for anti-LGBTIQA+ hate, vilification & violence-affected communities

IDENTIFIED RED FLAGS IN RURAL LGBTIQA+ EVENT & COMMUNITY SAFETY			
	Is this relevant in your community?		
► Collaboration between local mainstream and LGBTIQA+ stakeholders is tokenistic, lacking or missing, in <i>recovery</i> efforts to pre-event and event anti-LGBTIQA+ hate, vilification and violence.	YES	UNSURE	NO
► Local LGBTIQA+ community isn't at the heart of <i>recovery</i> efforts for local LGBTIQA+ events when there is to pre-event and event anti-LGBTIQA+ hate, vilification and violence.	YES	UNSURE	NO
► A traditional, mainstream approach to event risk and safety is applied post anti-LGBTIQA+ hate, vilification and violence.	YES	UNSURE	NO
► There's a lack of identified roles, clear role descriptions and/or a plan for resource allocation for key stakeholders in <i>recovery</i> efforts to pre-event and event anti-LGBTIQA+ hate, vilification and violence.	YES	UNSURE	NO
► There's minimal, or no, communication, engagement with and/or requests for significant input between lead mainstream stakeholders and local LGBTIQA+ community post-anti-LGBTIQA+ hate, vilification and violence.	YES	UNSURE	NO

IDENTIFIED GREEN FLAGS IN RURAL LGBTIQA+ EVENT & COMMUNITY SAFETY			
	Is this relevant in your community?		
► Gather all stakeholders to reaffirm ongoing allyship to the local LGBTIQA+ community, and plan an ongoing, collaborative recovery effort for LGBTIQA+ community, whilst centring local LGBTIQA+ community.	YES	UNSURE	NO
► Learning from and applying emerging LGBTIQA+ Individual Recovery Lessons.	YES	UNSURE	NO
► All critical stakeholders follow the <i>Anti-LGBTIQA+ Hate, Vilification and Violence Response and Recovery Plan</i> .	YES	UNSURE	NO

WHAT WE HEARD

“**Now I’m taking back my power.
I’m taking back my pride.**”

“Our strength is our care for each other”

“The most helpful thing that happened is we all got together after enough time and had a coffee; we reiterated our trust and respect in each other, and our common goal in going ahead together.”

“After-care isn’t just one week or one month; it needs to include anniversaries [of anti-LGBTIQA+-hate, vilification and cancellation] and days of significance”

“It’s changed the way we do things; I think for the better”

“I need to be able to say I’m not doing well after this; it impacts me every day”

“**It’s a gift to be ready.**”

“I’m in a place now that I can digest it better”

“It’s a bit of a cliché but it’s the whole capacity building thing. We need training at the moment, it’s typically all delivered in a utopian way but feel like it makes us feel falsely confident; we don’t recognise what’s happening around us until it’s too late. I feel like it’d protect us more as a community, to be empowered to protect ourselves.”

“Because of IT, we’ve been damaged, changed and altered. Initially we leaned into each other and now it’s prickly. People who were never angry, now are”

“We need something to uplift and upskill ourselves, and cope with the world we’re in.”

“It’s beyond ‘self-care.’ This is not burn a candle and she’ll be right”

“What’s your plan for holding queer leaders and community members?”

“**Support us in recovery.
Don’t give us something else to do.**”

RECOVERY

When it comes to RECOVER/Y, this section of the resource requires a different approach to the previous sections. Why?

Recovery didn't happen.

At the time of writing, impacted LGBTIQ+ leaders, community members and those that love them reported that there still has not been any local recovery effort. In presenting a high-level, draft version of this framework to our State-wide Rural LGBTIQ+ Community of Practice, one LGBTIQ+ festival director cried as she shared the impact of missed recovery opportunities on local community.

Additionally, what we heard included:

- “Recovery” was thought by mainstream organisations, leaders and partners to be, a limited to, immediate and short-term efforts to react and respond to pre-event and event related anti-LGBTIQ+ hate, vilification and violence;
- Impacted LGBTIQ+ leaders and community members sharing the ongoing impact and effect, and ‘residual burden’ of the anti-LGBTIQ+ hate, vilification and violence they experienced, and how it can compound their own existing trauma;
- Further, not only were impacted LGBTIQ+ leaders managing their own individual response and recovery to anti-LGBTIQ+ hate, vilification and violence, they were also supporting impacted and affected community members, often as volunteers, and almost always this work was unseen, unacknowledged and un-resourced;
- The lack of acknowledgment of the importance to, and challenge on, of anniversaries of events and any subsequent days of LGBTIQ+ significance on impacted LGBTIQ+ leaders and community members: *“It’s OK if people aren’t cheery on days of significance”*;
- How fair, reasonable and human responses to anti-LGBTIQ+ hate, vilification and violence doesn’t have a short, neat and convenient timeframe;

- Concern remains that there could be more, repeated or different anti-LGBTIQ+ hate, vilification and violence: *“There’s a lot of anxiety about safety”*;
- Due to an absence, or lack of allied response and recovery from mainstream organisations, leaders and their staff members, LGBTIQ+ community trust in them has been significantly shaken or broken with too many reports of how mainstream organisations, leaders and partners have now ‘stepped back’ from LGBTIQ+ engagement, work and events because it’s now *“too hard”*, *“too complicated”* and/or *“not the right time”*; and,
- The concern of impacted LGBTIQ+ leaders and community members that other community members, both LGBTIQ+ and not, could experience hate, vilification and violence from local, regional and state-wide extremist groups.

“I’m in a place now that I can digest it better, but I’m still not ok atm. I need to be able to say I’m not doing well after this, it impacts me every day. I can’t hold all of this all of the time, it’s too much to carry. We live in a rural community and conservative and sometimes extremist views are part of it, but it’s probably the most profound feeling of fear I’ve felt in my history of being openly gay. I don’t think [Council, Victoria Police, mainstream health and other stakeholders] get it and aren’t taking it on board as they should. It’s gonna be a tough year...”

Unlike in the previous sections of this resource, we don’t have existing examples of actual RECOVER/Y that has taken place. Instead, we have a combination of emerging recovery practice, clues from impacted communities, as well as thoughtful, focused and community-led ideas from impacted LGBTIQ+ leaders and community members. In particular, we’ll outline this combination of ‘Three Plus One’ Recovery Clues:

- Reaffirm ongoing allyship to the local LGBTIQ+ community, and plan an ongoing, collaborative recovery effort for LGBTIQ+ community.
- Learning from Individual Lessons So Far; and,
- Learning from Emerging Community Lessons So Far.

RECOVER

Reaffirm ongoing allyship to the local LGBTIQ+ community, and plan an ongoing, collaborative recovery effort for LGBTIQ+ community.

All stakeholders critical to the delivery of the local LGBTIQ+ ecosystem are led in an LGBTIQ+ community-first approach by LGBTIQ+ leaders and community members to:

- ▶ Reaffirm ongoing allyship to the local LGBTIQ+ community, with a commitment to understanding what this looks like post- anti-LGBTIQ+ hate, vilification and violence;
- ▶ Demonstrate allyship by being open to feedback from LGBTIQ+ leaders and community members on local *Prepare, Response* and *Recovery* efforts that is uncomfortable, inconvenient and appropriately critical;
- ▶ Build on the response efforts outlined in, and delivered from, the *Anti-LGBTIQ+ Hate, Vilification and Violence Response and Recovery Plan*; (for more on this, see [Page 27](#))
- ▶ Identify any gaps in support and resourcing in response effort/s that can be addressed, including accessing regional and state-wide supports and resources;
- ▶ Build on the foundations of their *LGBTIQ+ Event (Response and Recovery) Communications Plan*; (for more on this, see page Y)
- ▶ Understand, and communicate, to all stakeholders and community members, that recovery doesn't have a short, neat or convenient timeframe;
- ▶ Take lessons and wisdom from natural disaster and emergency recovery efforts and applying these to local LGBTIQ+ events impacted by anti-LGBTIQ+ hate, vilification and violence; and,
- ▶ Work alongside LGBTIQ+ leaders, community members and those that love them to proactively reflect, plan and prepare for how best to support and hold community on important anniversaries and days of LGBTIQ+ significance.

A note on mainstream employers of LGBTIQ+ staff members who have been impacted by pre-event and event anti-LGBTIQ+ hate, vilification and violence: we've heard examples of LGBTIQ+ staff members feeling unsafe, sidelined and, sadly in some cases, targeted as a result of them speaking up about missed opportunities in preparation and response, reactions to anti-LGBTIQ+ hate, vilification and violence, and/or an absence of recovery. It would be a missed opportunity to not allow those staff members support and a process to safely offer feedback that is uncomfortable, inconvenient and appropriately critical. It's Rural Pride Australia's experience that this feedback is almost always an opportunity for continuous quality improvement, yet too rarely taken in that spirit.

A note on missed opportunities for response and recovery, and mainstream allyship: It's not too late. If you are a decision-maker in a mainstream organisation with LGBTIQ+ staff and/or have partnered with local LGBTIQ+ leaders to deliver LGBTIQ+ events that were impacted by anti-LGBTIQ+ hate, vilification and violence, put down this resource, contact them and offer to find and pay for LGBTIQ+-safe, trauma-informed clinical supervision. Not off-the-shelf EAP. Sourced professionals. Immediately.

²⁵ "The locus of control concept explains how people perceive control over their lives, with internal locus linked to self-agency & external locus to outside forces. An internal locus of control often enhances motivation, resilience & problem-solving abilities." See: <https://positivepsychology.com/internal-external-locus-of-control>

RECOVER

Learning from Individual Lessons So Far

All stakeholders critical to the delivery of the local LGBTIQ+ ecosystem take an LGBTIQ+ community-first approach by incorporating and responding to key lessons learnt from previously impacted LGBTIQ+ leaders and community members, by understanding key identified **individual** needs post-anti-LGBTIQ+ hate, vilification and violence and creating, rebuilding or restoring:

- ▶ An internal locus of control²⁵ if there has been a temporary shift to an external locus of control;
- ▶ A sense of everyday safety within local and regional community;
- ▶ Trust in mainstream organisations, leaders and its staff members;
- ▶ A sense that those perpetrating anti-LGBTIQ+ hate, vilification and violence aren't the majority; and,
- ▶ The understanding that LGBTIQ+ communities have a right to feel safe, supported, welcome and included in their own local and regional community.

Additionally, impacted LGBTIQ+ leaders and community members have shared some lessons that have worked for them:

- ▶ Engaging in LGBTIQ+-safe, trauma-informed counselling support;
- ▶ Speaking up if you're not feeling OK with safe, trusted people with capacity;
- ▶ Speaking up if the response and support is not enough for you;
- ▶ Learning about extremism and how it operates locally;
- ▶ Removing yourself from spaces that feel unsafe, such as mainstream settings or LGBTIQ+ community gatherings;
- ▶ Pressing pause on LGBTIQ+ work, community and events without guilt;
- ▶ Concurrently not deliberately isolating yourself from your people, community and other supports due to guilt about real or perceived contribution to the local LGBTIQ+ ecosystem; and,
- ▶ Significant self-compassion, self-kindness and self-gentleness.

A note on self-isolation: during the six weeks leading to the Marriage Equality Postal Survey (2017), Rural Pride Australia visited 21 regional and rural Victorian communities to check on the impact of the postal survey. One common theme was LGBTIQ+ leaders and community members withdrawing from local communities, their people and supports because: (a) they needed to instigate self-care given local and national debate, hate and vilification; and, (b) they were feeling like they were "bad" LGBTIQ+ leaders and community members for not doing more locally. In each case, these individuals thought they were the only one, not realising what they were experiencing was fair, reasonable, human and all-too-common.

A note on reaching out: some LGBTIQ+ leaders have called for the development of easy, practical strategies (e.g. cuppas, cards, messages, calls) to empower LGBTIQ+ leaders, community members and allies to reach out to those affected following anti-LGBTIQ+ hate, vilification and violence. Particularly, helping the people who would like to help yet aren't sure how.

RECOVER

Learning from Emerging Community Lessons So Far

All stakeholders critical in the delivery of the local LGBTIQ+ event take an LGBTIQ+ community-first approach by incorporating and responding to key lessons learnt from previously impacted LGBTIQ+ leaders and community members, by understanding key identified community needs post-anti-LGBTIQ+ hate, vilification and violence, including:

- ▶ Supporting and resourcing LGBTIQ+ community to come together, potentially through providing secretariat and capacity building efforts;
- ▶ Naming lateral violence as one response to anti-LGBTIQ+ hate, vilification and violence²⁶;
- ▶ Ensuring that mainstream organisations don't inadvertently fuel local lateral violence by being selective with which LGBTIQ+ leaders and community members they support; and,
- ▶ Bringing together all stakeholders critical to the local LGBTIQ+ event delivery sooner rather than later to review preparation and response, check recovery efforts and consolidate any lessons learnt.

A note on LGBTIQ+ community and lateral violence:

"Lateral violence is where members of a marginalised group harm others in the same group. The term 'violence' here does not just refer to physical violence but also social, emotional, psychological, economic and spiritual violence. It can include gossiping, jealousy, bullying or shaming others. It often occurs due to frustration, distress or internalised bias caused by collective historical injustice, experience of trauma and loss of power. Power imbalances between groups mean that people may consider it 'safer' or more acceptable to attack members of their own group, rather than the dominant group or system, to access what little power is available to them. This can be conscious or unconscious."

Guideline: Race discrimination in the workplace, VEOHRC²⁷

Knowing that lateral violence is one response to anti-LGBTIQ+ hate, vilification and violence, it's vital that we're transparent about this, naming it as well as holding each other accountable if it arises. This might mean there's a need to rebuild trust within community. Further, we have a responsibility to not be a bystander to this lateral violence. Part of this conversation has to include where we are focusing the energy of our fears, angers and unrealised hopes: ourselves, each other or those perpetrating anti-LGBTIQ+ hate, vilification and violence in addition to those key stakeholders who are not part of the *Prepare, Respond* and *Recover* solution.

"Our strength is our care for each other.

*No bitchiness or bullsh*t"*

Polly Filla, Bendigo Pride Festival

A note on coming together as stakeholders to review, post-event: there are many ways to conduct a review, and communities are encouraged to utilise what works best for them.

For those without review resources and expertise, the process can be as simple as asking for questions:

- ▶ How did it go?
- ▶ What went well? (i.e. What would we not do differently next time?)
- ▶ What would you do differently next time?
- ▶ Consolidation: What needs to be put in place?

On this final question, impacted communities, leaders and community members have urged that efforts are taken so that there is not a repeat of missed opportunities, issues and challenges. This was one clear recommendation given to allow them to reclaim their agency and power, and to take back their pride. They were also clear that they wanted their peers, colleagues and loved ones to know the implications of anti-LGBTIQ+ extremism at a local and regional level. This must include documentation, potentially with the support and resourcing by mainstream organisations, leaders and staff members.

²⁶We heard some examples of lateral violence that occurred after LGBTIQ+ leaders and groups in communities had temporarily put aside their differences (and paused previous lateral violence) to respond successfully to anti-LGBTIQ+ hate, vilification and violence; some reported differences and lateral violence resuming, despite their hopes of a new era of caring collaboration.

²⁷https://www.humanrights.vic.gov.au/static/b3a29c6c401b6077ee4f2a4e01664d3a/Resource-Workplace_race_discrimination-Guideline-FN-Jul_2024.pdf

RECOVER

Example: Soon after their long weekend is behind them, the ChillOut Festival Committee prioritises meeting to come together, look at the data they've collected across the festival, celebrate the wins, stories and moments, as well as reflecting on the "hard stuff" and challenges for next time.

A note on safety in neighbouring communities:

be mindful that the impact of anti-LGBTIQA+ hate, vilification and violence, as well as the backlash to any response and recovery efforts, could be felt those neighbouring and surrounding communities in the region.

Final Emerging Clues and Lessons in Recovery

All stakeholders critical to the local LGBTIQA+ ecosystem consider the following emerging clues and lessons in recovery, particularly:

- ▶ Mainstream organisations, leaders and staff members doing the work to understand the role that they play in the local LGBTIQA+ ecosystem, particularly making the shared wisdom in this resource part of their local, everyday business as usual;
- ▶ Learning what other LGBTIQA+ communities, leaders and community members have experienced, and how they've responded, including collective community care and vicarious LGBTIQA+ resilience²⁸;
- ▶ Learning key lessons from hard-fought and hard-won bushfire recovery efforts;
- ▶ Learning about extremism, global trends and how it operates locally, for example, the work of Dr Josh Roose²⁹; and
- ▶ Learning to respond to everyday LGBTIQA+ resistance.

Example: LGBTIQA+ Communities: Recovering, Preparing & Responding for a Better Future (See Appendix A)

In a deliberate, rural-focused response to a rise in anti-LGBTIQA+/trans and gender diverse attacks in the north-east of Victoria, a number of organisations and projects organised and delivered a Shepparton-based workshop for local LGBTIQA+ community and their fiercest allies.

Twenty-three participants attended from across the north-east of Victoria, with all surveyed participants

subsequently reporting being able to recognise, respond and put into action what they'd learnt about vicarious LGBTIQA+ trauma and resilience. All participants reported feeling "more connected" to LGBTIQA+ community following the workshop.

A note on key lessons from bushfire recovery: LGBTIQA+ leaders and community members have noted some of disaster recovery lessons that they want applied, including:

- ▶ Local LGBTIQA+ community defining what recovery is for them;
- ▶ Breaking any cycle of jumping from crisis to crisis to reduce the risk of burnout; "*LGBTIQA+ leaders are infamous for jumping from crisis to crisis*"
- ▶ Local LGBTIQA+ community decide how significant events of anti-LGBTIQA+ hate, vilification and violence are documented, having control over how the story is told, why it matters and the impact it had; and,
- ▶ The consideration of a physical anchor for recovery, such as a plaque, to ensure that significant events of anti-LGBTIQA+ hate, vilification and violence are memorialised. This could also include examples of local LGBTIQA+ resilience and resistance, such as during the marriage equality postal survey.

Example: Rural Pride's Engaging LGBTIQA+ Resistance Workshops

These workshops are for anyone who is LGBTIQA+ Resistance-curious. During these workshops, participants learn:

- ▶ How to identify, unpack and understand LGBTIQA+ resistance in local, everyday settings;
- ▶ The difference between competence and confidence, and the importance of both in challenging resistance;
- ▶ The common and effective ways to respond to, interrupt and engage LGBTIQA+-resistant individuals in everyday situations;
- ▶ How to tailor their own individual ways to respond to, interrupt and engage; and,
- ▶ How to plan for challenging LGBTIQA+ resistance success in local, everyday settings.

²⁸A term coined by Dr Merrin Wake in response to anti-LGBTIQA+ hate, vilification and violence in recent years.

²⁹<https://experts.deakin.edu.au/52352-josh-roose>

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Future funding for events, festivals and gatherings to reflect the new anti-LGBTIQ+ hate, vilification and violence reality.

- ✓ To acknowledge that more preparation and planning is required to keep communities safe, including the need for LGBTIQ+-safe security for permanent, fixed venues.
- ✓ To reflect there's now a likelihood that there could, and will, be some response and recovery effort required.

2. Deliver a series of state-wide webinars, including information about anti-LGBTIQ+ hate, vilification and violence.

- ✓ These webinars should include information about the implications of new anti-LGBTIQ+ hate, vilification and violence laws, especially in a regional, rural and local government context; and,
- ✓ These webinars should socialise this resource, and the work for each of the *Prepare*, *Respond* and *Recover* stages.

3. Establishment of a central, LGBTIQ+-safe reporting option in Victoria for those affected by anti-LGBTIQ+ hate, vilification and violence

- ✓ There needs to be a central place for capturing this information, and the stories behind them, given the implications for LGBTIQ+ community safety in its absence

"We experience it, but we didn't have a platform to report it"

- ✓ Pilot a Queer Crimestoppers Program
"we're hypervigilant for a reason"

"it's our job to notice, and to let people know who can respond, who will respond; the community know it's happening and it's coming"

4. Better coordination of state-wide services and supports in regional and rural communities

- ✓ Better facilitation of links to, and clearer offering from, state-wide organisations and services
- ✓ Pilot localised funding for better understanding how communities can realise the full potential of promoting, coordinating and accessing state-wide services and supports.

- ✓ Connecting LGBTIQ+ leaders and community members affected by anti-LGBTIQ+ hate, vilification and violence for peer support and strengths-based support.

5. Pilot Localised Regional and Rural Safety Summits

- ✓ Build on existing LGBTIQ+ work to creating tailored, localised LGBTIQ+ community safety plans that centre local LGBTIQ+ community and draws on multiple mainstream stakeholders, resulting in LGBTIQ+ communities being centred, supported and safe before, during and after events.
- ✓ Consider holding regular high-level roundtables that include LGBTQIA+ leaders, police, mainstream organisations, including Council and its executives, support services and first-responders.
- ✓ Host them regionally.

6. Develop resources to respond to online anti-LGBTIQ+ hate, vilification and violence.

7. Pilot a program of upskilling LGBTIQ+ event organisers in emergency management, in partnership with leading Victorian organisations, such as Emergency Recovery Victoria and the Municipal Association of Victoria.

8. Fund LGBTIQ+ Community Leadership Sustainability programs, particularly LGBTIQ+-safe, trauma-informed counselling support for all LGBTIQ+ community leaders (and agreed standards for them).

9. Develop a Shared Collaborative Care Model

- ✓ Work with regional and rural LGBTIQ+ communities and leaders to develop a shared collaborative care model that reflects the best of regional and rural communities, accounts for the opportunities and challenges, allows localised adaptation and the ability to draw on a state-wide community of practice.

THANK YOU

Consistently, LGBTIQ+ leaders, community members and those that love them across regional and rural Victoria have told us that not enough people are showing up and turning up for them and the tough conversations. For showing up and turning up to this tough conversation, Rural Pride thanks you.

SAFETY & SUPPORT RESOURCES TO CONSIDER

We understand that this can make for tough reading. Please consider these supports and don't hesitate to access them:

Switchboard Victoria/Qilfe:

1800 729 367

switchboard.org.au/qlife

(includes Webchat)

Queerspace

(03) 9663 6733

queerspace.org.au

OTHER HELPFUL RESOURCES

We've heard during this project that the following resources have been useful for LGBTIQ+ leaders, event organisers and community members:

The Youth Affairs Council Victoria (YACVic) has produced this resource in partnership with its Healthy Equal Youth (HEY) partners:

yacvic.org.au/advocacy/fighting-back-against-lgbtiqa-discrimination

The Victorian Pride Lobby offers 'Dealing with threats to LGBTIQ+ events in Local Government' resource as well as its work on the Rainbow Local Government campaign: vicpridelobby.org

Rainbow Community Angels, including requests for training and event support:

rainbowcommunityangels.org.au

The Victorian Local Government Association (VLGA) has a rainbow resource for Victorian Councils:

vlga.org.au/resources/vlga-rainbow-resource-victorian-councils

ACON NSW has produced guides to hosting LGBTQ+ events, including guidance for NSW Councils:

acon.org.au/what-we-are-here-for/safety-inclusion/#acon-guides-to-hosting-lgbtq-events-safely

For guidance on progressing LGBTIQ+ inclusion in regional and rural places, spaces and settings, consider the co-designed resource, the **Rainbow Ready Roadmap**:

vic.gov.au/rainbow-ready-roadmap

For more information, support and/or training to complement the LGBTIQ+ inclusion work already happening in your community and region, contact us at **Rural Pride**:

ruralpride.au

The Victorian Commissioner for LGBTIQ+ Communities advocates for the rights, safety and wellbeing of lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and gender diverse, intersex, queer and asexual communities. Contact the Office of the Commissioner for LGBTIQ+ Communities here:

vic.gov.au/victorian-commissioner-lgbtiqa-communities

APPENDIX A

LGBTIQA+ COMMUNITIES - RECOVERING, PREPARING & RESPONDING FOR A BETTER FUTURE

In a deliberate, rural-focused response to a rise in anti-LGBTIQA+/trans and gender diverse attacks, including targeting and the subsequent cancellation of the North East Rainbow Ball, a partnership response was developed to support impacted LGBTIQA+ communities in Shepparton and Wangaratta.

Combining resources, expertise and time, Uniting Vic.Tas, Rural Pride Australia, The Aware Project, The Diversity Project Shepparton, GV Pride, Thorne Harbour Country, Switchboard Victoria and LINE Wangaratta delivered a workshop in Shepparton and community-building events for Wangaratta were planned in partnership with local Pride Networks.

The identified aims of the Shepparton-based workshop, for local LGBTIQA+ community and their fiercest allies, were:

1. To provide a visible, deliberate rural and regional response to the rise in anti-LGBTIQA+/trans and gender diverse behaviour, acknowledging Shepparton's proximity and regional connections to Wangaratta and Wodonga and demonstrating that experience and response to homo, bi and transphobia and other LGBTIQA+ discrimination are different when it's regional and rural;
2. To bring LGBTIQA+ community together to reflect, build knowledge, skills and tools to invest in themselves and support each other into the future; including to provide knowledge, skills and an action plan for identifying, responding and referring to vicarious trauma; and,
3. To focus local LGBTIQA+ communities on planning for individual and collective support.

Twenty-three participants attended from across the north-east of Victoria, with all surveyed participants subsequently reporting being able to recognise, respond and put into action what they'd learnt about vicarious trauma and resilience. All participants reported feeling "more connected" to LGBTIQA+ community following the workshop.

An online survey was completed following the workshop to understand the impact of the experience. Particularly, what stood out was:

- 100% of participants recognised signs of Vicarious Trauma in themselves, their ecosystems or their community in the workshop;
- 100% of participants were able to better able to respond to Vicarious Trauma in themselves, their ecosystem or their community after this workshop;
- 100% of participants indicated they would put what they learnt into practice following the workshop; and,
- 100% of participants reported they felt "more connected" to LGBTIQA+ community following the workshop.

Amongst the suggestions for further support and action was the clear need for additional workshops to follow-up and build on this response workshop. Some participants also suggested that this workshop be offered to other affected communities.



APPENDIX B

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF COMMUNITY SAFETY SURVEY

Rural Pride Australia surveyed members of the Victorian Rural LGBTIQA+ Community of Practice in July and August 2024, with sixteen regional and rural communities having their say about community safety, their current experiences and the role of non-LGBTIQA+ stakeholders. Importantly, a handful of communities contacted us to talk of their experiences ‘off the record’ out of concern that they and/or their community could be identified. These experiences are not included in this summary, yet are being captured for our upcoming community safety resource (2025).

Importantly, there are good stories to tell of regional and rural LGBTIQA+ events and gatherings across Victoria. Yet, anecdotally and, in this survey, when asked about regional and rural LGBTIQA+ community safety, most respondents highlighted serious concerns.

When asked about regional and rural LGBTIQA+ community safety, respondents highlighted serious concerns. The vast majority of respondents (87.5%) described regional and rural LGBTIQA+ community safety as being largely absent, unstable and under threat, or in need of significant improvement.

When Rural Pride Australia asked about regional and rural LGBTIQA+ community events and gatherings in the first half of 2024, it found significant changes in event and gathering preparation, planning and delivery. Particularly, respondents across regional and rural Victoria told us in 2024:

- 50% of respondents had an LGBTIQA+ event or gathering delayed, postponed or cancelled in their community because of community safety concerns; almost one-fifth of communities were unsure if this was the case;
- 75% of respondents had an LGBTIQA+ event or gathering changed or altered in their community because of community safety concerns; almost one-fifth of communities were unsure if this was the case;
- Almost two-thirds of respondents (62.5%) reported that LGBTIQA+ events or gatherings hadn’t been planned or considered in their community because of community safety concerns; and,

- 100% of respondents reported that online anti-LGBTIQA+ hate and vilification played a significant role, and negatively so, in their consideration of preparing and planning for, and delivery of, regional and rural LGBTIQA+ events and gatherings.

When asked about their local and regional stakeholders, collaborators and partners for regional and rural LGBTIQA+ community safety, respondents highlighted serious concerns and/or question marks in relation to the role of Victoria Police and local Councils. Particularly, respondents across regional and rural Victoria told us in 2024:

- Almost one-third of respondents were satisfied with local engagement and involvement by Victoria Police in the planning, delivery and follow-up with an LGBTIQA+ event or gathering; over one-third were ‘somewhat’ satisfied; and one-quarter of respondents were not satisfied; and,
- Almost one-third of respondents were satisfied with local engagement and involvement by their local Council in the planning, delivery and follow-up with an LGBTIQA+ event or gathering; one in ten were ‘somewhat’ satisfied; and just under one-half were not satisfied.

Only one-quarter of respondents had a pathway for reporting anti-LGBTIQA+ hate and vilification in regional and rural communities, highlighting their local LGBTIQA+ community/group, their own organisation or Victoria Police as options.

Almost half of the respondents reported not knowing, or being unsure, of any supports to access after incidents of local anti-LGBTIQA+ hate and vilification. Some respondents echoed what Rural Pride Australia has heard in the last 18 months across the state: LGBTIQA+ leaders and community are left supporting their own community after incidents of local anti-LGBTIQA+ hate and vilification, often as volunteers.

When asked about what supports they need after incidents of local anti-LGBTIQA+ hate and vilification, respondents came up with practical regional and rural LGBTIQA+ community-centred recommendations, suggestions and ideas, which are presented in full.

