

**Submission
No 63**

INQUIRY INTO ANTI-LGBTIQA+ HATE CRIMES IN VICTORIA

Organisation: Drummond Street Services

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Drummond Street Services: Submission to the Inquiry into Anti-LGBTIQ+ Hate Crimes in Victoria

May 1st, 2026

Introduction

Drummond Street Services [DSS] and Queerspace welcome the opportunity to contribute to the inquiry into anti-LGBTIQ+ hate crimes in Victoria. As a community-based organisation providing LGBTIQ+ specialist supports across family violence, youth, families, and recovery, we work alongside people every day who are navigating complex experiences of harm, marginalisation, and engagement with systems.

Our practice is grounded in trauma-informed, intersectional, and community-led approaches. This submission draws on what we consistently see across our services, as well as speaking to experiences of many of our peer and lived experience workforce. We want to highlight the lived complexity of anti-LGBTIQ+ harm, the limitations of current responses, and the critical role of community-led approaches in both prevention and recovery.

Our key messages are centred around the understanding that an effective response to addressing the issue of LGBTQIA+ hate crime requires more than legislative reform. Any approach must be genuinely intersectional, recognising the diversity within these communities and the overlapping forms of marginalisation many people experience. It must also address the broader historical and contemporary drivers of hate-related behaviour and violence, which impact not only LGBTQIA+ people but all marginalised groups. These experiences often intersect with those of First Nations communities, as well as minority faith, disability, and racialised communities.

At a national level, this requires an integrated response that acknowledges the rise of right-wing extremism, misogyny, and white supremacist movements, and responds with coordinated, intersectional strategies. A public health and wellbeing framework can provide a strong foundation, offering protective benefits across communities while building broader social buy-in and collective effort.

Proportional universalism is also key, enabling responses that are universal in scope but tailored to specific groups. This should include a continuum of interventions spanning prevention and promotion, early intervention, and legal, social, and community-led responses.

Key areas we are advocating for include:

1. School based, parenting education, whole-of-family wellbeing promotion activities, and early in life prevention initiatives.
2. A holistic approach that goes beyond criminalisation to include community-based reporting, prevention, bystander, and recovery supports, in line with data demonstrating that criminalisation escalates these behaviours and further is weaponised against disproportionately marginalised groups.
3. A genuinely intersectional understanding and response that recognises compounded impacts for those experiencing multiple forms of marginalisation, such as transwomen of colour or queer Muslim young people, while recognising that diverse forms of hate and discrimination are enabled by the same drivers.
4. Strengthen and broaden existing hate crime legislation and policing frameworks, while establishing community-led oversight mechanisms, to support a more collective approach that sits alongside identity-specific responses.

Practice insights

Across our services, anti-LGBTIQIA+ harm is increasingly normalised, complex in its presentation, and often difficult to name. This is particularly true of harms against young people, those living regionally, and those navigating multiple forms of marginalisation.

We are seeing identity-based harm occurring across a wide range of settings. These include peer relationships, family violence contexts, schools, public settings, and online environments, and is a particular concern in regional and rural communities where LGBTIQIA+ people are often isolated and lack access to support and information. The rise in technology-facilitated abuse has added another layer of complexity, with harm often embedded in everyday interactions and therefore harder to recognise, evidence, and respond to.

Many people we work with are not aware that what they are experiencing can be identified as a hate crime. This reflects not only the often subtle or cumulative nature of the abuse, but also a broader lack of shared understanding, within communities as well as across service system, about how these harms present and how they should be addressed.

Our national research exploring the role of discrimination in the lives of LGBTIQIA+ people and its impact on mental health and wellbeing, found that over 60% of LGBTIQIA+ people had experienced discrimination at work, in public or with family [[CFRE, 2024](#)]. These experiences were prevalent across all settings:

Setting	% experienced discrimination (in the last five years)
At work or in formal volunteering	63%
In a public space or event	62%
In family relationships (broadly defined)	60%
In healthcare	52%
Within LGBTIQ+ community/ies	49%
In transport, including taxis, rideshare, trains, buses	39%
Through government, whether local, state or federal	32%
Within another cultural (not LGBTIQ+) or religious community	31%
In housing	19%
From legal systems or law enforcement, including policing, prisons, courts	18%

Our research found that discrimination was associated with lower levels of mental wellbeing, as well as higher levels of financial stress and loneliness ([CFRE, 2024](#)). The high prevalence of discrimination in the lives of LGBTIQ+ people has a real impact on our wellbeing. These experiences occurred in places where anti-discrimination policies and legislation are in place, where people should reasonably expect protection and inclusivity ([CFRE, 2024](#)).

As an organisation with a diverse workforce that aims to represent the cohorts we service, our own staff have reported examples of hate crime and harassment in work-related settings. In the month prior to completing this submission, two of our staff members were subject to verbal threats of violence and abuse related to being a person of colour and their gender identity. Our staff have also been exposed to threats and abuse related to sexual assault and physical violence through email, in person and via social media.

Case study

A volunteer facilitator of one of our workshops, a non-binary person and drag artist, experienced online harassment and doxing after putting videos of their drag performances online. This harassment was specifically from members of far-right groups, who incorrectly associated drag artists with paedophilia and grooming of children. Our facilitator was harassed, received death threats and their personal information was leaked, including their home address. Several individuals turned up at their address a few days later masquerading

as delivery drivers. Thankfully they were able to determine these individuals were not who they stated to be. However, this was in most part due to awareness gained after previous instances of harassment and a mistrust of non-LGBTIQA+ community members.

This individual did not feel safe or comfortable contacting the police, due to previous instances of discrimination, downplaying their experiences and inaction from law enforcement. Drag artistry was their primary source of income, however after this incident they did not feel safe or comfortable performing or posting to social media and were left without employment; experiencing such significant financial and housing stress that they required crisis support from DD as a client.

To understand this incident, we must correctly position it within the current and historical actions of police and the legal system, leading to community members feeling unable to seek assistance from law enforcement. Systematic transphobia and homophobia continue to exist in all levels of government and law enforcement, from inaction to micro-aggression, to laws barring gender affirming care. We must consider structural and historical factors that lead an individual like this to not feel comfortable receiving support for such a significant and life altering experience of hate.

Intersectionality

The impacts of anti-LGBTIQA+ harm are not experienced uniformly across communities. Evidence consistently shows that people who hold marginalised identities, including First Nations LGBTIQA+ people, trans women of colour, LGBTIQA+ refugee and asylum seekers and LGBTIQA+ people with disability experience higher rates of violence, discrimination and institutional harm (Hill et al., 2021; Hill et al., 2020). For these cohorts, incidents are often more frequent, more severe and more complex due to the compounding effects of racism, ableism, misogyny and colonial violence (Day et al., 2022; Hill et al., 2021).

Our research mirrored that of Private Lives 3 (Hill et al., 2020) and Writing Themselves In 4 (Hill et al., 2021), finding that the compounded effects of experiencing multiple forms of marginalisation and discrimination was common among LGBTIQA+ people across Australia and led to lower mental wellbeing, financial stress and higher levels of loneliness.

Our research methods included a client file audit that found LGBTIQA+ service users had experienced being mocked, bullied, harassed, and violently attacked by family members, friends, intimate partners, housemates, colleagues, employers, health professionals, and strangers. Some service users also reported trauma symptoms related to these experiences, and suicidal ideation ([CFRE, 2024](#)).

Systems mistrust

A consistent theme across our work is a lack of trust in legal and justice systems, particularly policing and court responses. While there are examples of positive engagement, including supportive interactions with LGBTIQA+ Liaison Officers, these experiences are not consistent. We continue to see instances where system responses have caused further harm, including the use of discriminatory language when individuals attempt to report abuse.

The lack of consistent and appropriate responses from legal and justice systems combined with historical discrimination experienced by LGBTQIA+ people when attempting to find support and pathways to justice, has created a system where outcomes depend heavily on people to 'do the right thing' rather than ensuring consistent and safe practice. As a result, many LGBTQIA+ people, particularly those with multiple marginalised identities, choose not to engage with formal systems at all, which can have lasting negative impacts on individual wellbeing but also minimises the pervasive nature of violence and discrimination against LGBTQIA+ people as it is not accurately captured or reflected in quantitative data.

Additionally, it is important to consider that LGBTQIA+ people often want access to affirming, safe and tailored services that are specialised in delivering support for the community (Hill et al., 2020). These spaces provide not only support, but also a way to build confidence, understand options, and, where possible, navigate broader systems. It is vital to have 'soft entry points' to the wider service system where community organisations play a critical role bridging the gap between individuals, community, and formal systems responses.

Based on our research exploring the impact of discrimination on mental health and wellbeing among LGBTQIA+ people, we developed principles for effective service responses ([CFRE, 2024](#)). These are five core principles to guide responses that are effective at addressing and responding to the needs of LGBTQIA+ people:

1. **Establishing safety** – recognition that people's interactions with services are influenced by their experiences of discrimination. This involves affirming all identities, including at the intersections, taking time to create a sense of safety, and trauma-informed, non-judgemental, person-centred responses that follow through with promised support.
2. **Intersectional practice** – an understanding that individuals exist with multiple aspects of identity and experiences that cannot be separated. This involves affirmation of all parts of a person's identity as well as being educated about the impact of cumulative discrimination on wellbeing.
3. **Advocacy at all levels** – understanding inequities and gaps in services, especially for LGBTQIA+ people who experience cumulative discrimination. It requires skills to challenge and dismantle systemic barriers and promote self-advocacy where appropriate.
4. **Flexibility in responding to diverse and co-occurring needs** – incorporates intersectional practice whilst being responsive to intersecting and co-occurring needs. This involves being responsive to need and taking a human-rights and trauma-informed approach to support all factors contributing to wellbeing, including material wellbeing and community connection.
5. **Coordinated, integrated and holistic services** – integration of wrap-around support across services; working in a coordinated way across service systems. This involves a holistic lens that enhances coordination and integration especially when all services utilise this approach.

Practice example

LGBTIQA+ young people accessing our programs consistently report experiencing anti-LGBTIQA+ verbal harassment and concerns for their safety when travelling to and from services. These reports, alongside earlier co-design and consultation processes with young people on their safety needs, have informed organisational risk mitigation strategies. This includes minimising external identification of service sites to support participant anonymity.

At some locations, additional measures have been implemented, such as not publicly listing service addresses, to reduce program visibility and mitigate the risk of targeted harassment or violence towards participants and staff.

Young people also report adopting their own safety strategies, including travelling together or coordinating drop-off and pick-up arrangements. There have been instances of participants presenting to services following recent physical assaults, including incidents involving groups known for violent behaviour in areas surrounding program locations.

Case Study

A First Nations LGBTIQA+ young person living in a regional area experienced multiple incidents that negatively impacted their safety and wellbeing, both within their community and in their interactions with police. The young person reported feeling let down by police responses to family violence incidents at their home due to a lack of support in increasing their safety and minimising risk in the home.

During adolescence, the young person experienced a targeted, violent anti-LGBTIQA+ physical assault perpetrated by a group of peers, which was recorded. In a separate incident, the young person reported that an on-duty police officer directed anti-LGBTIQA+ slurs towards them in a public setting.

As a result of these cumulative experiences of racism, homophobia, and transphobia, alongside an awareness of the historical and ongoing negative experiences of First Nations and LGBTIQA+ people within the justice system, the young person was reluctant to report these incidents.

With support from LGBTIQA+ lived-experience staff at Queerspace, the young person and their family accessed a range of supports, including assistance to undertake safer reporting through an LGBTIQA Liaison Officer for one incident. One incident remains unreported.

Drivers of radicalisation and hate-based violence

While the hate crimes that have precipitated this inquiry may be specifically anti-LGBTIQA+ in their presentation, we recognise that the same drivers are shared across all forms of radicalisation and hate based violence. Power structures such as transphobia, homophobia, racism, ableism, settler colonialism, and others not only form the context in which such harms take place but actively shape how they develop. These structures have impacts on whether a person or group's experiences of insecurity or frustration may lead to solidarity, or to scapegoating of other groups and violence.

Ellen Pence (2011) proposed four pillars which uphold power-based violence and abuse: entitlement and superiority; expectation of submission; dehumanisation of groups with less access to power; and freedom from consequences. These pillars, alongside grievance formation rooted in structural inequality, serve to legitimise narratives for violence, portraying it as defensive, protective and necessary. From a public health perspective, treating groups as 'suspect' is likely to increase risk of radicalisation. For example, enactment of police and justice responses in which biases against marginalised groups as more likely to be policed or subject to greater levels of accountability, fail to meaningfully address the behaviours. Carceral responses so often have weaponised against the very communities who experience the very behaviours such as hate crime.

"In addition to addressing the structural inequities that fuel feelings of anger and resentment, we need to promote solidarity among diverse communities by building a pluralistic civil society that offers a meaningful alternative to the violent rhetorics of us and them." (Rousseau, C., et al, 2021, Transcultural Psychiatry)

Rather than being addressed in isolation, LGBTIQIA+ focussed hate crimes should be recognised as existing within a broader context of culturally based and grievance catalysed violence, inextricable from power-based harm against all marginalised groups.

Community and protective factors

Our community-based programs consistently demonstrate the importance of connection, identity, and belonging as protective factors. Initiatives such as QHub, QSpace, and Q+Law create safe and affirming programs where people can connect with others, access support, and engage with systems in ways that feel safer and more accessible.

The wider Queerspace services within DSS also provides many spaces for community to engage and receive support, information, and recover from harmful experiences. Examples include LGBTIQIA+ specific 'solidarity sessions', workshops, and community events like galas and school camps. These programs are particularly important in regional areas, where isolation can be more pronounced and access to inclusive services is limited.

However, these responses remain under-resourced and unevenly distributed, which limits their reach and long-term impact. To meaningfully prevent and respond to hate crime, investment must extend beyond crisis and enforcement responses to include sustained support for community that fosters safety, inclusion, and collective wellbeing across multiple settings public spaces, workplaces and other institutions and settings. This requires resourcing for setting and place-based, peer-led, and culturally responsive programs that are designed and delivered in partnership with the communities they serve.

Gaps and challenges

There are significant gaps across both community and service systems. Many systems, including policing, legal services, and broader service sectors, continue to

operate from heteronormative and mainstream frameworks that do not fully account for the dynamics of anti-LGBTIQIA+ harm. Indeed, many trans people including those queer people of colour continue to experience harm and hate from the very systems which have a legal responsibility for their human right to safety. It therefore remains difficult for our clients to receive well-informed and safe responses to their experiences of identity related hate crime.

Additionally, technology-facilitated abuse is evolving rapidly, and systems are struggling to keep pace. Our clients are navigating extremely complex relationships within mainstream and LGBTIQIA+ communities, as well as interpersonal and family relationships. They often struggle to identify and articulate their experiences, let alone differentiate between identity-based crime and family violence, for instance.

This also raises ongoing questions about how workforce capability is developed, supported, and sustained to effectively and safety support clients in these situations. These challenges are often amplified in rural and regional communities, where both access to services and specialised knowledge may be more limited.

A critical, overarching consideration is the lack of a unified, integrated approach in the way government reforms are designed and implemented, leading to isolated responses to specific forms of hate. A more effective response requires stepping back to examine the shared drivers underpinning all hate crime, including systemic inequality, social exclusion, and entrenched prejudice. These drivers must also be considered alongside historical and structural contexts, such as Australia's legal and systemic discrimination against First Nations Peoples, LGBTIQIA+ people, and migrant and refugee communities. By recognising these commonalities, future reform may progress fragmented interventions toward a more cohesive, whole-of-society approach. This creates greater potential to address root causes, strengthen community trust, and deliver more sustainable, long-term change across all affected communities.

Key priorities

Without investment in prevention, education, and community-led initiatives, there is a real risk that reforms will not translate into outcomes of improved safety and access to meaningful recovery.

DS advocates for the following key priorities identified under each key area:

- 1. Stronger prevention frameworks, including within public education, and school and community-based initiatives**
 - Expanding education-based programs Respectful Relationships, and diversity and inclusion initiatives to address drivers of hate and discrimination, including misogyny, transphobia, homophobia, racism, ableism, and settler colonialism
 - Strengthening community understanding of rights, protections, and pathways to support through community education programs
 - Amplifying and resourcing additional lawyer co-location in Victoria schools through community legal partnerships

2. A holistic approach that goes beyond criminalisation to include community-based reporting, prevention, bystander training and recovery supports
 - Clear, funded options for victims of crime to receive support through non-punitive pathways
 - Fund the research and collection of data on experiences of hate crime amongst the LGBTQIA+ community through community led reporting pathways, eg. Recovery based program data
 - Provide education initiatives for community-led prevention within LGBTQIA+ services
3. A genuinely intersectional response that recognises compounded impacts for those experiencing multiple forms of marginalisation
 - Co-designed training and capability building across policing, legal, and service systems
4. Strengthen and broaden existing hate crime legislation and policing frameworks, while establishing community-led oversight mechanisms, to support a more collective approach that sits alongside identity-specific responses
 - Fund a future review into new anti-vilification legislation regarding whether the scope is appropriate and implementation has been effectiveness
 - Improving consistency and accountability in police response to all hate crime, ensuring integration of effective LGBTQIA+ specific response into new VIC hate crime task force
 - Ensuring community oversight of hate crime policing via a community oversight panel
 - Introduce 'Justice Navigator' positions to bridge the gap between community and systems responses to hate crime
 - Strengthen media and online platform regulations to ensure greater accountability
 - Approve Victims of Crime Support for LGBTQIA+ people experiencing hate crime, regardless of whether this progresses to court
 - Consideration of alternate pathways to justice, including restorative justice and other non-punitive responses

Conclusion

Anti-LGBTIQIA+ hate crimes are not isolated incidents but are rather shaped by broader social, cultural, and systemic conditions. While recent cases have prompted this inquiry, they reflect a much wider issue.

Hate crimes often target people at the intersections of multiple forms of marginalisation, while also being driven by the same underlying forces such as racism, homophobia, transphobia, sexism, and other forms of exclusion. Treating these issues through siloed responses limits effectiveness. A more integrated approach through a unified, evidence-based understanding of key drivers and impacts of hate crime, one that recognises both the uniqueness and shared elements of these experiences, offers greater potential for meaningful change.

Drummond Street Services advocates for stronger hate crime prevention frameworks embedded across multiple systems. Community services and legal centres play a key role in providing specialised services and should be better resourced to fill gaps such as education, parenting, and early intervention initiatives.

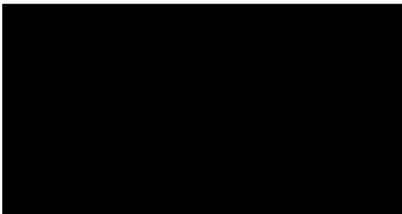
Responses must also move beyond criminalisation alone, incorporating community-based reporting, bystander approaches, and accessible recovery supports, particularly given evidence that punitive responses can escalate harm and disproportionately impact marginalised communities.

Strengthening legislative and policing frameworks should therefore occur alongside community-led oversight mechanisms to enable meaningful community engagement and accountability in system responses. This includes strengthening and broadening existing legislation and policing practices to explicitly include LGBTQIA+ experiences, while moving toward more integrated, collective responses to all identity-related hate crime.

Ultimately, reducing hate crime requires a shift toward prevention, community leadership, and coordinated, whole-of-society approaches that address shared drivers, target root causes and recognise the diverse lived experiences of LGBTQIA+ people alongside other marginalised communities.

Drummond Street Services appreciates your time and consideration of this issue.

Kind regards



Karen Field (Chief Executive Officer)

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