

# **SUBMISSION TO THE INQUIRY INTO ANTI- LGBTIQA+ HATE CRIMES IN VICTORIA**

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## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

### Dr Justin Ellis

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Dr Justin Ellis leads research and fosters collaboration with government agencies, and non-government organisations to uncover and address technosocial biases within platforms, cultures, and institutions. These biases can erode trust-both interpersonal and institutional-while deepening social exclusion. With over thirty publications in this field, including two sole-authored monographs, his research examines the complex intersections of technology, discrimination and justice. His 2023 monograph *Representation, Resistance and the Digiqueer: Fighting for Recognition in Technocratic Times* (Bristol University Press 2023) examines how mis- and disinformation, algorithmic discrimination, and digital platform accountability intersect with LGBTQ+ communities' responses to rising hate. Meanwhile, his 2021 monograph *Policing Legitimacy: Social Media, Scandal and Sexual Citizenship* (Springer 2021), analyses the impact of bystander social media video scrutiny on police, LGBTQ+ rights, and police accountability. Dr Justin Ellis is an appointee to the Task Force Atlas community consultative committee, part of the NSW Police Force response to the recommendations from the Special Commission of Inquiry into LGBTIQ hate crimes in NSW (1970-2010).

### Adjunct Professor Nicole L Asquith

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Adjunct Professor Nicole L Asquith has worked for over 30 years with academic colleagues, community and government organisations (including police and prosecution) to prevent and respond to all forms of hate crime in Australia and the UK. She is the National Convenor of the Australian Hate Crime Network, Co-convenor of the Tasmanian Prejudice-Related Violence Working Group, and was an expert witness to the Sacker Inquiry into LGBTIQ Hate Crimes in NSW (1970-2010). In her role as Executive Director of cursing\_circe\_consultancy, Nicole has led several recent projects directly relating to the remit of the Victorian Inquiry, including work with Equality Tasmania on community upstander training, upskilling CALD advocates to be hate crime first reporters, development of LGBTIQ+ inclusion plans for local councils, and advising Equality Australia on a national blueprint on hate crime against LGBTIQ+ communities. In addition to her 30 years of activism and scholarship on hate crime, whilst in the UK she was an active member of the West Yorkshire Police Race, and LGBTQ, Hate Crime Scrutiny Panels.

## INTRODUCTION

The Victorian Government and its Legislative Council Legal and Social Issues Committee are commended for resourcing this inquiry into the drivers of anti-LGBTIQ+ hate crimes in Victoria and the unique experiences of hate experienced by LGBTIQ+ communities. While the focus is on the needs of Victorian communities, this inquiry is timely and necessary for initiating increased attention to this unique form of hate crime both nationally and in other jurisdictions. Building on the exemplary work of Justice Sackar in relation to the 91 homicides of gay and transgender women in NSW between 1970 and 2010, this inquiry offers one of the first opportunities to consider what next steps are required to support victim-survivors and their communities.

We welcome the opportunity to further explore our response to the Terms of Reference if in-person evidence is sought. We especially welcome the opportunity to discuss matters that exceed the ToRs, including the long-tail of justice for victim-survivors, and offender accountability and behaviour change, which we have enumerated in response to the ninth ToR.

Attention to hate crime—or prejudice motivated crime, or targeted violence—has increased significantly in the years since 7 October 2023, and especially since the Bondi attack in December 2025. There has been renewed focus on the confluence of technology and the social origins of discrimination against certain groups, that while amplified by the global reach of social media, is grounded in the criminalisation and pathologisation of aspects of identity. Much of the flurry of legal, policy and practice change has sought to respond and prevent antisemitic, and to a lesser extent, Islamophobic and racist violence. Similarly, in the years since October 2023, when Australians rejected the proposition of giving First Nations people a voice, Call It Out has tracked the ebbs and flows of racist violence against First Nations people in Australia. In response, the Federal Government has taken action for the first time to respond to the perceived increase in violence targeting marginalised communities, with the establishment of three inquiries: the 2026 Royal Commission on Antisemitism and Social Cohesion, the 2026 Parliamentary Inquiry into Racism, Hate and Violence directed at Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and the 2025 Parliamentary Inquiry into Antisemitism in Australian Universities. Similar inquiries have also been initiated at the state level, including the 2026 NSW Parliamentary Inquiry into Antisemitism, and the 2026 NSW Parliamentary Inquiry on Extremist Movements. These movements use 'sexual emergency' crisis framing, amplified through digital platforms and traditional media as a key anti-

LGBTIQ+ communication tactic to minimise, omit, or erase LGBTIQ+ expression.<sup>1</sup> These inquiries, at times, touch on the experiences of LGBTIQ+<sup>2</sup> victim-survivors but are not focussed on their experiences.

While these inquiries are important in addressing the targeted violence experienced by racially, religiously, and culturally diverse communities, they tell us little about the experiences of LGBTIQ+ Australians (or even their intersectional experiences as racially, religiously, and culturally diverse LGBTIQ+ people), and in some cases, our communities have been excluded from the legal, policy and practice innovations developed out of these inquiries. At most, the 2026 NSW Parliamentary Inquiry on Extremist Movements has identified that along with other targeted communities, LGBTIQ+ Australians are specifically targeted by extremist movements.<sup>3</sup> Our experiences of everyday hate, however, remain opaque.

The most significant series of inquiries relating to LGBTIQ+ violence were those created in response to community pressure to explore the 91 homicides of gay men and transgender women in NSW between 1970 and 2010. Starting with Operation Parrabell, then the NSW Legislative Council Standing Committee on Social Issues Inquiry into Gay and Transgender Hate Crimes between 1970 and 2010, and finalising with the Sackar Special Commission of Inquiry into LGBTQ hate crimes in NSW, these inquiries identified unique victimisation characteristics of some violence directed at our communities.<sup>4</sup> However, the terms of reference for all three was firmly focussed on the public, “stranger-danger” violence experienced by gay men, and to a lesser extent transgender women. The more domesticated violence experienced by the LGBTIQ+ community, including the unique forms of domestic and family violence experienced predominantly by lesbian and bisexual cis women and trans women and men remains under-explored.

Perhaps as an artefact of the framing of violence against our communities as public violence, and the increased attention to organised hate groups, the everyday hatred experienced by LGBTIQ+

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<sup>1</sup> Ellis, JR (forthcoming). Sexual emergency crisis framing and the far-right in Australia. In J McSwiney & I Richards (eds), *The Australian Far Right in Times of Crisis*. Routledge.

<sup>2</sup> The LGBTIQ+ initialism is used throughout this submission to encompass a broad range of innate sex characteristics, sexualities, and gender identities while acknowledging its limitations in capturing all of those lived experiences. If varied, the initialism is the one used in the work cited. The term ‘queer’ has been used as an umbrella term.

<sup>3</sup> NSW Legislative Assembly Committee on Law and Safety 2026, *Measures to combat right-wing extremism in New South Wales*. Sydney: Parliament of NSW.

<sup>4</sup> Ellis, J. R., & Asquith, N. L. (2025). The NSW Special Commission of Inquiry into LGBTQ hate crimes (1970–2010) and police accountability. *Current Issues in Criminal Justice*, 37(4), 661-678. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10345329.2025.2564510>

people has been under-explored. As noted by Vergani et al,<sup>5</sup> a critical factor in the opaqueness of hate crime experiences is the lack of a consistent definition of hate crime across Australian and institutional jurisdictions. In these contexts, it is impossible to talk about prevalence, let alone, trends, in heterosexist and cissexist hate crime.

What each of these inquiries consistently finds, however, is that the extent and trends of violence targeting the LGBTIQ+ community are impossible to ascertain at this time in the absence of a third-party reporting system and a hate crime victims' advocacy service. Each parliamentary and commission of inquiry into hate crime has identified under-reporting of hate crime as a critical gap in evidence, which leads too often to perfunctory law, policy, and practice that fails to account for the missing data, nor seeks this data to inform implementation and evaluation of state responses.

In the following sections, we address all but one of the Terms of Reference and enumerate some of the gaps that have not been articulated in these ToRs. We have re-ordered the ToRs to scope, first, the prevalence and trends in anti-LGBTIQ+ hate crime, and second, the impact of these crimes, before fully exploring the contexts, and particularly the technological context of this violence. We welcome the opportunity to explore our responses in more detail, and to see the outcomes of this inquiry.

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<sup>5</sup> Vergani, M, Perry, B, Freilich, J, Chermak, S, Scrivens, R, Link, R, Kleinsman, D, Betters, J, & Iqbal, M 2024, Mapping the scientific knowledge and approaches to defining and measuring hate crime, hate speech, and hate incidents: A systematic review. *Campbell Systematic Reviews*, 20, e1397; Vergani, M, Betts, B, Perry, B, Chermak, S, Freilich, J, Scrivens, R, & Link, R 2025, Approaches to Defining the "hate Element" of a behavior: A data-drive typology. *Crime and Delinquency*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00111287251384670>

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Each of the recommendations below have been integrated into our responses and aligned with each of the ToRs.

1. That the Victorian Government advocates for the establishment of a national third-party reporting system that includes all forms of hate crime and hate incidents
2. That the Victorian Government advise Victoria Police on the development of hate crime indicators in the crime reporting system
3. That the Victorian Government mandate dedicated police training on reporting and investigating hate crimes (including the collection of unique hate crime forensic evidence)
4. That the Victorian Government resource a comprehensive victimisation study of LGBTIQ+ Victorians, including their experiences of heterosexist and cissexist (ex-)intimate partner, family, and sexual violence
5. That the Victorian Government advocates for the establishment of a national Hate Crime Victims Advocacy Service
6. That the Victorian Government advocates for workforce development of allied criminal justice practitioners (including psychologists) to increase capability of recognising, reporting, and responding to hate crime victimisation
7. That the Victorian Government establish a bespoke Victims of Crime support package that reflects the unique harms of hate
8. That the Victorian Government, state and territory governments, and the federal government, emphasise pre-bunking as a strategy to address anti-LGBTIQ+ mis- and disinformation.
9. That the Victorian Government, state and territory governments, and the federal government, seek continuous improvement in transparency of access to digital platform and dating app user data, so that those platforms are better responding to public expectations of security settings and complaints processes.
10. That the Victorian Government monitor digital platforms for the diffusion effects on prohibited hate groups, and as enacted in the *Combating Antisemitism, Hate and Extremism (Criminal and Migration Laws) Act 2026* (Cth).

11. That the Victorian Government advocates to the Federal Government to extend federal protections under the *Combating Antisemitism, Hate and Extremism Act 2026 (Cth)* to innate sex characteristics, sexuality, and gender identity
12. That the Victorian Government advocates to the Federal Government that online and in-person activity of declared hate groups is monitored
13. That the Victorian Government advocates to the Federal Government to enact regulations or legislation for more robust content moderation.
14. That the Victorian Government further integrate safe use of technology such as QR codes to increase access to safe reporting mechanisms of hate, and to build social cohesion online and in-person.
15. That the Victorian Government continue to fund and promote dedicated LGBTIQ+ public and online safety initiatives.
16. That the Victorian Government, state and territory governments, and the federal government, continue to work with LGBTIQ+ organisations to develop outreach programs that target LGBTIQ+ individuals with diverse sexualities and gender identities who may not identify as LGBTIQ+, or access queer public health and safety information.
17. That the Victorian Government, state and territory governments, and the federal government, continue to pressure Big Tech companies to prioritise safety over engagement metrics by: implementing proactive content moderation (while balancing this moderation with the implied freedom of political communication in the Australian constitution), increasing transparency over content moderation decisions and algorithmic decision-making (including sorting, recommendation, search, and filtering algorithms); and where relevant, strengthening hate speech policies, and improving enforcement of such policies.
18. That dating app companies that have signed up to the Australia Online Dating App Code of Conduct continue to report on the measures they are taking to minimise harm to users of their apps, and to encourage the reporting to dating apps of hate experienced by LGBTIQ+ users, to build a clearer evidence-base of anti-LGBTIQ+ hate through dating apps.
19. That digital platforms and dating app companies continue to work with LGBTIQ+ community organisations and police to develop further communication strategies to address online anti-LGBTIQ+ hate and its manifestation into in-person hate, ranging from slurs to assault.

20. That the Victorian Government, state and territory governments, and the federal government, work with international policing agencies and digital platforms and dating app companies to monitor and report on 'grey zone' operations that target LGBTIQ+ expression.
21. That the Victorian Government, state and territory governments, and the federal government, advocate for LGBTIQ+ rights with states that criminalise and pathologise diverse sexual orientation and gender identity, and who may be generating anti-LGBTIQ+ mis- and disinformation that can be legitimised through political support for anti-LGBTIQ+ rhetoric.
22. That the Victorian Government works with other state and Federal Governments to convene a national forum of targeted communities to explore the full ecology of hate crime and the strategies necessary to prevent and respond to hate crime.

## PREVALENCE & TRENDS OF ANTI-LGBTIQA+ HATE CRIMES

### ToR 6: Existing empirical data regarding the prevalence and trends of anti-LGBTIQA+ hate crimes Australia-wide

We cannot speak with any certainty on the prevalence and trends of anti-LGBTIQA+ hate crimes in Australia, especially in the context of our absence from nationally representative data collected by the Australian Bureau of Statistics. Unlike other targeted communities, and despite leading Australia in responding to hate crime in the late 1980s, LGBTIQA+ communities have not had their own third-party reporting and support system since the mid-2000s when ACON ceased collecting data through its Anti-Violence Project. The AVP existed as a project of the Gay and Lesbian Rights Lobby from the early 1990s, but capacity and funding to continue this work has since been lost. During this time, several studies<sup>6</sup> were undertaken to explore the unique characteristics of targeted violence against LGBTIQA+ people. In his comparative analysis of this early hate crime data, George<sup>7</sup> found that 48% of respondents had experienced physical assault and 26% had experienced threats of violence due to their sexuality or gender identity.

What was identified early in hate crime activism and scholarship was the critical tipping points in hate crime identification, reporting, and police responses. As Thorneycroft and Asquith<sup>8</sup> identified in relation to ableist hate crime, there are seven critical tipping points where the successful reporting and recording of hate crime may be obstructed, each of which requires both community and government (incl. police) action:

1. The victim must understand a crime has been committed
2. The victim recognises prejudice may have been a motivating (or aggravating) factor
3. The victim (or another person) solicits the help of the police
4. The victim (or another person) informs police of the prejudicial motivating factor
5. Police acknowledge/recognise the prejudicial motivating factor

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<sup>6</sup> Cox, G. 1992a, *Interim Report of the Streetwatch Implementation Advisory Committee*, Sydney: NSW Anti-Discrimination Board; Cox, G. 1992b, *Off Our Backs*, Sydney: Lesbian and Gay Anti-Violence Project; Cox, G. 1994, *Count & Counter*, Sydney: Lesbian and Gay Anti-Violence Project; NSW Attorney General's Department 2003, *'You shouldn't have to hide to be safe': A report on homophobic hostilities and violence against gay men and lesbians in New South Wales*. Sydney: NSW Government; Sandroussi, J & Thompson, S 1995, *Out of the Blue: A Police Survey of Violence and Harassment against Gay Men and Lesbian*. Sydney: New South Wales Police Service.

<sup>7</sup> George, A 2008, Hate Crimes against Lesbians and Gay Men in New South Wales: Accumulated Knowledge of Victimization via Five Reports. W(h)ither Human Rights: Law and Society Association Conference, Sydney.

<sup>8</sup> Thorneycroft, R.M. & Asquith, N.L. 2015, The Dark Figure of Disablist Violence, *Howard Journal of Criminal Justice*, 54(5), 489-507

6. Police document the prejudicial motivating factor, and apply appropriate human rights/hate crime charges
7. Police successfully record the incident of hate crime to the appropriate record-keeping authority

An additional step in this process is that police collect and archive appropriately the hate crime forensic artefacts to ensure that evidence of the hate crime motivation or demonstrated hostility is recorded and used in any further criminal justice processes. At each of these steps, the capacity and willingness to report/record a hate crime can be forestalled, especially when the victim (or person reporting) encounters a police officer who is unaware of the characteristics of hate crimes and/or is unwilling to record the incident as a hate crime.

As “hate crime” is not a substantive crime in the criminal codes or crimes Acts in most Australian states (except for Queensland and Western Australia), policing organisations are not compelled to respond to this violence in similar ways to that of, for example, family and intimate partner violence. Without substantive hate crime offences, police organisations may not feel it is necessary to create bespoke reporting fields in their complaint systems to adequately document reports of hate crime, nor fully enable and train their officers to recognise, record and respond to hate crimes reported to the police.

Most often these issues with reporting/recording hate crime are addressed within victimised communities by a range of strategies, including the development of community-led third-party reporting systems, such as True Vision in the UK.<sup>9</sup> Third-party reporting systems enable communities to increase awareness of these crimes and provide a vehicle through which victims can report safely and to a person/organisation that has their interests at heart. Trust building between victimised communities and the police is also facilitated through the intermediary of the third-party reporting system. These third-party reporting systems are unlike those in Australia—such as the Islamophobia Register Australia, Call It Out, Executive Council of Australian Jewry, and I am Not a Virus. The True Vision portal is linked to (and funded by) UK policing agencies, and on the consent of the reporter, these data are transferred to police even if the victim does not want to pursue a criminal justice response. Australian community reporting systems collect and analyse

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<sup>9</sup> Asquith, N.L. 2012, Vulnerability and The Art of Complaint Making, in I Bartkowiak-Théron & NL Asquith, (eds), *Policing Vulnerability* (pp.147-164). Sydney: Federation Press; True Vision 2026, Report a hate crime. [https://www.report-it.org.uk/your\\_police\\_force](https://www.report-it.org.uk/your_police_force)

data reported to them, and in some cases, in victim-survivor support, and these organisations may provide assistance in reporting to police; however, this is not the central aim of these databases. Data sovereignty—especially for First Nations victim-survivors—is paramount, as this ensures that victim-survivors' experiences (and data) are held respectfully, and with no compulsion in sharing this data with police. Importantly, LGBTIQ+ communities have not had such a reporting and victim-support system since the closure of the Anti-Violence Project in the mid-2000s.

With these contexts in mind, we are reliant on two main data sources to inform our understanding of the prevalence and trends in heterosexist and cissexist violence (also known as homophobic and transphobic violence).<sup>10</sup> Without our inclusion in national representative studies such as *Personal Safety Australia*<sup>11</sup>, we are reliant on:

1. Community and academic research
2. Police records

As we note below, there have been several community surveys and research studies, which include, at least, a question or two as to targeted violence. The most recent study that included questions about hate crime victimisation is that undertaken by Ben Scott as part of his yet to published PhD looking at how LGBTIQ+ Australians view the police.<sup>12</sup> Earlier research by Mason et al<sup>13</sup> explored the contexts of hate crime in Victoria, including the adequacy of Victoria Police's Prejudice Motivated Crime (PMC) strategy. Similarly, Vergani et al<sup>14</sup> have explored both the online contexts of hate, as well as the possible indicators of hate crime for use by police and third-party reporting systems.

This research evidence is critical in legal, policy and practice development, but none fully explores the unique experiences and contexts of LGBTIQ+ hate crime victimisation, the prevalence of

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<sup>10</sup> We use the terms heterosexist and cissexist violence to avoid the minimisation and pathologisation that comes with a "phobia" framing of this violence. We suggest that framing hate against LGBTIQ+ people minimises the social and institutional artefacts of this violence, and pathologises individual "bad apples" as primary perpetrators. As has been found repeatedly, very few of those who attack our community fear us. As with sexist and racist violence, we prefer the structural framing of the violence.

<sup>11</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics 2023, *Personal Safety Australia*. Canberra: ABS.

<sup>12</sup> See interim results from this study as they relate to trust in police; Scott, B, Pfitzner, N & Fitz-Gibbon, K 2025, Queering police legitimacy theories: (dis)trust, context, and visibility, *Policing and Society*, 35(8), 1068-1083.

<sup>13</sup> Mason, G, Maher, JM, McCulloch, J, Pickering, S, Wickes, R, & McKay, C 2017, *Policing Hate Crime: Understanding Communities and Prejudice*. London & New York: Routledge.

<sup>14</sup> Vergani, M, Stefanopoulos, A, Lee, A, Tran, H, Richards, I, Goodhardt, S, & Barton G. 2022, *Defining and identifying hate motives: bias indicators for the Australian context*. Melbourne: Centre for Resilient and Inclusive Societies; Vergani, M, Giovannetti, A, & Goodhardt, D 2025, *Tracking the 2023 wave of anti-trans and anti-drag mobilisation in Australia*. Deakin University.

these crimes, and trends over time. As noted by Asquith<sup>15</sup>, hate crimes against LGBTIQ+ people oscillate over time depending on broader social and political context—and increasingly, international contexts such as the ongoing attacks against LGBTIQ+ people in the US. As with racism, Islamophobia and antisemitism, key events outside a jurisdiction can “give permission” to those within a jurisdiction to act on their prejudices. This is most obvious in the last 5-10 years in the attacks against trans and gender-diverse folks and drag story time events (see later exploration of this context in ToR1), with 85% of trans and gender diverse folks reporting that they had been exposed to significantly more online hate, and 40% had experienced more or significantly more online anti-trans abuse, harassment or vilification.<sup>16</sup> These experiences of targeted violence spiked during the national tour of anti-trans lobbyist, Kellie-Jay Keen.

### Australian police data on LGBTIQ+ hate crimes

While laudable efforts are currently under development by the Australian Institute of Criminology to track *police reported* hate crimes, as the authors of this submission have advised governments repeatedly across our careers, LGBTIQ+ people are unlikely to report to police due to historical and contemporary estrangement between the community and police. The National Hate Crime Database<sup>17</sup> illustrates this trust gap between community and police—and the inadequacies of police reporting systems—with almost all incidents on this database relating solely to the hate violence of displaying Nazi symbols, and inciting hatred on ground of race.

Research conducted by Mason on data collected by the NSW Police Force noted that of the 1,050 cases NSW Police Force recorded as a bias crime or incident from 2013-2016, 14 per cent related to victimisation on the basis of sexuality or gender. In the years leading up to the marriage equality plebiscite in 2017, when the LGBTIQ+ community regularly described being harassed and vilified, the NSW Police Force recorded only 147 reports of hate crime against the LGBTIQ+ community.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Asquith, NL 2008, *The Text and Context of Malediction: A Study of Antisemitic and Heterosexist Hate Violence*. Saarbrücken: VDM Verlag

<sup>16</sup> Trans Justice Project & Victorian Pride Lobby 2023, *Fuelling Hate: Abuse, Harassment, Vilification and violence against Trans People in Australia*. Melbourne TJP & VPL; Vergani, M, Giovannetti, A, & Goodhardt, D 2025, *Tracking the 2023 wave of anti-trans and anti-drag mobilisation in Australia*. Deakin University; Ellis 2022 *A fairy tale gone wrong: social media, recursive hate and the politicisation of Drag Queen Storytime*. *The Journal of Criminal Law*, 86(2), 94–108. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1177/00220183221086455>. See also, Osborn, M 2025, *Groomers, gays, and gender ideology: Why the anti-LGBTIQ+ legislative backlash is a moral panic and why criminologists should care*. *Punishment & Society*, 27(5), 959-983; Kline, N, Bidell, MP, & Rhodes, SD 2025, *Global Hate Politics Against LGBTQ+ People*. *Sexuality Research and Social Policy*, 22, 1-3.

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.aic.gov.au/statistics/national-hate-crimes-database>

<sup>18</sup> Mason, G. 2019, *A Picture of Bias Crime in New South Wales*, *Cosmopolitan Civil Societies*, 11(1), 47-66.

Mason’s research clearly illustrates the inadequacy of relying on police reported data given the significant distrust of police (discussed below) and the hesitancy of some LGBTIQ+ people to seek a criminal response to their victimisation, especially those who are also highly criminalised due to race and disability.

In a small community study with all targeted communities in Victoria, Vergani & Navarro<sup>19</sup> found that there are multiple factors that inhibit reporting of hate crime to police, which we note in Table 1 below. An important finding from this research was the gap between intention to report to police and community organisations in hypothetical scenarios, and actual reporting to police in response to personal victimisation. For example, reporting rates to police for a core volume crime—physical assault—varied from 93% in a hypothetical scenario to 39% in actual victimisation.

Table 1: Typology of barriers to reporting hate crimes and hate incidents (adapted from Vergani & Navarro<sup>20</sup>)

CATEGORY	TYPE	INDICATOR
Internal	Internalisation	Feelings of hopelessness
		Normalisation of hate
		Perceptions of structural oppression
		Self-deprecation
		Cultural norms
External	Lack of awareness	Not knowing what is a hate crime or a hate incident
		Not knowing where and how to report
	Fear of consequences	Retaliation
		Being outed
		Getting in trouble
		Affecting a relationship
	Lack of trust in statutory agencies	Pointlessness of reporting
		High personal costs in relation to low benefits
		Not being taken seriously
		Uninformed response
		Discrimination by police
		Suspicion
	Accessibility	Barriers to physical access
Technological barriers		
Language barriers		

## Community and academic research

In contrast to police recorded data, in community victimisation surveys, more than 70 per cent of LGBTIQ+ people report having experienced bullying, harassment, or violence at some point during their lives because of their sexuality and gender identity, and approximately 80% know someone

<sup>19</sup> Vergani, M & Navarro, C 2020, *Barrier to Reporting Hate crime and Hate Incidents in Victoria*. Melbourne: Centre for Resilient and Inclusive Societies.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

who has been attacked because of their gender identity or sexuality.<sup>21</sup> In our current research on LGBTIQ+ people's trust in police, we found that of the 523 respondents who had contact with police in last 12 months, 5% indicated that this contact was in relation to heterosexist or cissexist hate violence. Importantly, this research has also found that only 22% of respondents noted that they trust *the* police, rising to 31% who trust LGBTIQ+ liaison officers.<sup>22</sup>

Another key source of data on prevalence and trends in LGBTIQ+ hate crime is *Private Lives* and *Writing Themselves In*—both of which are currently, or imminently, in their next iteration. *Private Lives 3* reports “experiences of violence based on sexual orientation and/or gender identity” but this includes a wide range of behaviours, including those not covered by either civil or criminal law (such as social exclusion 39%, and verbal abuse 35%).<sup>23</sup>

Table 2: Victimization data, adapted from *Private Lives 3*<sup>24</sup>

TYPE OF VIOLENCE OR HARASSMENT	N	%
Received written threats of abuse via emails, social media	1,310	22.1
Threats of physical violence, physical attack or assault without a weapon	874	14.6
Sexual assault	698	11.8
Received written threats of abuse via graffiti	301	5.3
Deliberate damage to property or vandalism – House	284	4.8
Physical attack or assault with a weapon (knife, bottle, stones)	231	3.9
Deliberate damage to property or vandalism – Car	210	3.7
Theft – Money	214	3.6
Theft – Property	195	3.4
Break in – House	151	2.6
Deliberate damage to property or vandalism – Work	119	2.1
Theft – Car	80	1.4

As noted in Table 2 above, 22% of respondents reported receiving online threats of violence, 15% threats or actual violence without a weapon, 12% targeted sexual violence, and 4% reported physical assault with a weapon. Along with criminal damage, these are the most likely forms of reported hate crime. With the conflation of threats of violence and actual physical assault without a weapon it is difficult to compare with nationally representative data; however, the ABS reports

<sup>21</sup> Australian Human Rights Commission, *Resilient Individuals: Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, & Intersex Rights 2015*, National Consultation Report; Berman, A. & Robinson, S. 2010, *Speaking Out: Stopping Homophobic and Transphobic Abuse in Queensland*, Bowen Hills: Australian Academic Press; NSW Attorney General's Department 2003, 'You shouldn't have to hide to be safe': A report on homophobic hostilities and violence against gay men and lesbians in New South Wales. Sydney: NSW Government.

<sup>22</sup> Ellis, J, Asquith, NL, & Mason, R (*forthcoming*) LGBTIQ+ People Trust in Police.

<sup>23</sup> Hill, AO, Bourne, A, McNair, R, Carman, M & Lyons, A (2020). *Private Lives 3: The health and wellbeing of LGBTIQ people in Australia*. Melbourne: Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society, La Trobe University.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

that only 1.8% of Australian adults experienced physical assault in the 2024/25 year<sup>25</sup>, which may be as high as 15% of the LGBTIQ+ community.

The reported experiences of targeted violence are significantly higher for trans and gender diverse folks. In their analysis of data collected from 3099 trans and gender diverse Australians, the Trans Justice Project and Victorian Pride Lobby<sup>26</sup> found that 90% had witnessed online anti-trans hate, 50% had experienced anti-trans hate, and 10% had experienced anti-trans violence. Mariotto et al<sup>27</sup> also found that up to 85% of sexual and gender minorities reported high exposure to online hate.

Recent research has shown that part of the challenge in the identification of hate crime is recognising the multiple vulnerabilities of the LGBTIQ+ population. This is a community not only vulnerable to street harassment or abuse by strangers (which we may associate with the traditional profile of a hate crime), but it is also a community, by the nature of their marginalisation, that experiences hate crimes perpetrated by those closest to them.<sup>28</sup> Hate crimes and incidents can be perpetrated by LGBTIQ+ people's partners, family and friends, and neighbours are some of the most common perpetrators of this violence.<sup>29</sup>

A critical gap in our knowledge about heterosexist and cissexist violence is the (ex-)intimate partner, family, and sexual violence experienced by our communities, particularly LGBQ cisgender women, and transgender and non-binary people. While some of these experiences of violence can be conceptualised through existing (cis)gendered models of interpersonal violence, a significant proportion of this violence is simultaneously hate motivated.

*Private Lives 3*<sup>30</sup> reports that 42% of LGBTIQ+ people have experienced at least one incident of intimate partner abuse, and 39% reported having experienced abuse by a family member. Non-binary people (29% physical violence - 52% verbal abuse) and transgender men (27% - 46%) are more likely to experience physical, verbal, and sexual violence than cisgender men and women and

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<sup>25</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics 2026, *Crime victimisation*. Canberra: ABS.

<sup>26</sup> Trans Justice Project & Victorian Pride Lobby 2023, *Fuelling Hate: Abuse, Harassment, Vilification and violence against Trans People in Australia*. Melbourne TJP & VPL

<sup>27</sup> Mariotto, M, Costa, S, Di Brango, N, Corbelli, G, Verbena, S, Palladino, BE, Zuffiano, A, Ioverno, S 2026, Understanding Online Hate Toward Sexual and Gender Minorities: A Systematic Review. *Trauma, Violence, and Abuse*. DOI: 10.1177/15248380261429520

<sup>28</sup> Asquith, NL & Fox, CA 2016, No Place Like Home: Honour, Heteronormativity and Hate Crimes, in A. Dwyer et al (eds), *Queering Criminology*. London: Palgrave, pp.163-182.

<sup>29</sup> Muravyeva, M & Kondakov, A.S. 2024, Queering Family Violence. *Journal of Family Violence*, 39, 1207-1218.

<sup>30</sup> Hill, AO, Bourne, A, McNair, R, Carman, M & Lyons, A 2020). *Private Lives 3: The health and wellbeing of LGBTIQ people in Australia*. Melbourne: Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society, La Trobe University.

transgender women. Queer (29% - 52%) and pansexual (31% - 51%) respondents reported higher rates of IPV than other sexualities. Evidence from Rainbow Health Australia's<sup>31</sup> analysis of domestic homicides collated by the National Homicide Monitoring Program found that at least 32 homicides since 1990 were likely to be LBQ women, non-binary, and transgender people, who were, or had recently ended, a relationship with a cisgender man. Too little is understood about these homicides to make a case for hate motivation in all deaths, but this finding warrants mention given that so much of the violence directed at female-identifying members of our communities is hidden from view or is buried deep in police statistics of gendered violence.

These IPV results are similar to those of family violence, where non-binary and transgender men, and pansexual and queer respondents report higher rates of physical, verbal, and sexual violence from family members.<sup>32</sup> In Greater Western Sydney, 45 per cent of participants in a study of LGBTIQ+ people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds reported having experienced family violence as a result of their sexuality and gender identity.<sup>33</sup> A significant challenge in policing hate crime in the LGBTIQ+ community, much like hate crimes in the disability community, is that these hate crime incidents may well be masked as family and domestic violence within police recording practices despite the underlying hate motivation or demonstrated heterosexual and/or cissexist hostility.

The other significant gap in our understanding of heterosexual and cissexist violence is the sexual violence experienced by our communities as retributive and "corrective" violence. In their NSW study of sexual violence experienced by LGBTQ+ people, Layard et al<sup>34</sup> found that 46% of respondents had experienced sexual violence across their lifecourse (child, adolescent and/or adulthood), which is significantly higher than the reported rate of sexual violence experienced by cisgender Australians (thought to be approximately 22%<sup>35</sup>). Contrary to the "stranger-danger" cliché of sexual violence, 77% of LGBTQ+ respondents' most impactful experience of sexual violence was perpetrated by someone known to the victim-survivor, with 86% of respondents noting this was a

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<sup>31</sup> RHA 2023 Personal communication.

<sup>32</sup> Hill, AO, Bourne, A, McNair, R, Carman, M & Lyons, A (2020). *Private Lives 3: The health and wellbeing of LGBTIQ people in Australia*. Melbourne: Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society, La Trobe University.

<sup>33</sup> Asquith, N.L., Collison, A., Lewis, L., Noonan, K., Layard, E., Kaur, G., Bellei, F., & Yigiter, E. 2019, Home is where our story begins: CALD LGBTIQ+ People's Relationships to Family, *Current Issues in Criminal Justice*, 31(3), 311-332.

<sup>34</sup> Layard, E, Parker, J, Cook, T, Murray, J, Asquith, NL, Fileborn, B, Mason, R, Barnes, A, Dwyer, A, Mortimer, S, 2022, *LGBTQ+ people's experiences and perceptions of sexual violence*. Sydney: ACON.

<sup>35</sup> National Association of Services Against Sexual Violence 2025, *Data about sexual violence*.

<https://www.nasasv.org.au/data#:~:text=More%20than%20one%20in%20five,Australian%20Child%20Maltreatment%20Study%2C%202023>

cisgender man. Of those known perpetrators, 49% of respondents believed that they were *not* part of the LGBTIQ+ community. Some of these experiences, as such, may be forms of “corrective” or “punitive” rape, where the perpetrator seeks to “cure” or punish LGBTIQ+ people for their sexuality.<sup>36</sup>

The stark differences between recorded police data for the LGBTIQ+ population and their self-reported experiences of violence shows that officially recorded crime does not match the community’s lived experiences of victimisation. These stark differences indicate the lack of trust in police and policing processes by LGBTIQ+ communities in Australia, which is consistent with international research.<sup>37</sup> For example, Feddes and Jonas<sup>38</sup> found that 16% of Dutch LGBT people had experienced heterosexist and cissexist hate crime, and of these, when compared to non-victims, victims had significant lower psychological well-being, lower trust in the police and lower intentions to report future hate crime. The research also illustrates that these experiences are not just a matter of historically bad relationships between the police and the LGBTIQ+ community; concerns with reporting experiences of hate crimes continue to the present day.

Effective reporting and recording systems are critical if we are to get a better sense of hate crime, its prevalence, and impacts. We know from national and international research that hate crime victims are less likely to report a hate crime than other comparable crimes without hate motivation or demonstrated hostility, in large part, due to existing and historically estranged relationships

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<sup>36</sup> United Nations 2014 (8 September) “*Corrective rape*” should be recognized as a hate crime. <https://news.un.org/en/audio/2014/09/591912>

<sup>37</sup> Dwyer, A., Ball, M., Bond, C., Lee, M., & Crofts, T. 2017, Exploring LGBTI Police Liaison Services: Factors Influencing Their Use and Effectiveness According to LGBTI People and LGBTI Police Liaison Officers. Report to the Criminology Research Advisory Council; Leonard, W. & Fileborn, B. 2018, Policing for Same Sex Attracted and Gender Diverse (SSASGD) young Victorians, Monograph Series No 110, GLHV@ARCSHS, La Trobe University: Melbourne; Fileborn, B. 2019, Policing youth and queerness: the experiences and perceptions of young LGBTQ+ people from regional Victoria, *Current Issues in Criminal Justice*, 31(3), 433-451; Pickles, J. 2019, Policing hate and bridging communities: a qualitative evaluation of relations between LGBT+ people and the police within the North East of England, *Policing and Society*, DOI: 10.1080/10439463.2019.1588269;

<sup>38</sup> Feddes, AR & Jonas, KJ 2020, Associations between Dutch LGBT hate crime experience, well-being, trust in the police and future hate crime reporting. *Social Psychology*, 51(3), 171–182

between these communities and the police.<sup>39</sup> Similarly, they are less likely to report to police directly than via a third-party reporting system that enables a mediated engagement with police.<sup>40</sup>

As noted above, LGBTIQ+ communities, especially young people, have low levels of trust in police. Evidence suggests that Australian LGBTIQ+ young people believe their reports of interpersonal violence and hate crimes will not be taken seriously by police – although there are positive signs that the presence of liaison officers can help rebuild community trust in policing.<sup>41</sup> Some sections of the LGBTIQ+ population, for example, transgender people and sex workers, may well have even lower levels of trust in police. A third-party reporting system, which is community-led, will ensure that the most vulnerable are not left behind by current systems of recording and reporting hate crime in criminal justice systems.

It is vitally important that police are trained to recognise the features of hate crimes as they affect the LGBTIQ+ community, and the intersecting vulnerabilities of our communities. One such factor is that those that perpetrate hate crime are often not organised extremist groups, though recent evidence to the NSW Parliamentary Inquiry into Extremist Violence has demonstrated that extremists target our communities alongside traditional race and religious-based hatred. In contrast to other forms of hate crime, LGBTIQ+ people experience violence from those intimately known to LGBTIQ+ victims, including their family and partners, neighbours and work colleagues. It is important that police and third-party bodies are trained to recognise how hate crimes manifest in each community, and that a crime can be *both* a hate crime and an incident of family violence. At present, police may recognise these incidents as domestic or family violence, but not identify these same events as hate crimes. Recognising the nature of LGBTIQ+ hate crime goes to the heart of reporting, recording, dealing appropriately with violent crime (including diversionary programs), and providing adequate victim support services. As we note below, we also need to invest in the

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<sup>39</sup> Asquith, N.L. 2012, Vulnerability and The Art of Complaint Making, in I Bartkowiak-Théron & NL Asquith, (eds), *Policing Vulnerability* (pp.147-164). Sydney: Federation Press; Iganski, P. and Lagou, S. 2015, The personal injuries of hate crime. In Hall et al (eds), *The Routledge International Handbook on Hate Crime* (pp34-46). London & New York: Routledge; Christmann, K., & Wong, K. 2010, Hate crime victims and hate crime reporting: some impertinent questions. In Chakraborti, N (ed), *Hate Crime, Concepts, Policy and Future Directions*. Willan Publishing; McDevitt, J., Balboni, J., Garcia, L., & Gu, J. 2001, Consequences for Victims: A Comparison of Bias- and Non-Bias-Motivated Assaults, *American Behavioral Scientist*, 45(4), 697–713; Iganski, P. 2001, Hate Crimes Hurt More, *American Behavioral Scientist*, 45(4), 626–638; Wong, K. and Christmann, K. 2008, The role of victim decisionmaking in reporting of hate crimes, *Safer Communities*, 7(2), 19-35.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid, Asquith 2012

<sup>41</sup> Dwyer, A., Ball, M., Bond, C., Lee, M., & Crofts, T. 2020 What stops LGBTI people from seeking support from LGBTI police liaison officers?, *Trends and Issues in Criminal Justice*. Canberra: AIC; Richards, K., Cross, C., Dwyer, A. 2018, Police perceptions of young people: a qualitative analysis, *Police Practice and Research* 20(4), 360-375; Dwyer, A. 2015, Teaching young queers a lesson: How police teach lessons about non-heteronormativity in public spaces, *Sexuality and Culture*, 19(3), 493-512.

development of alternative justice mechanisms for those LGBTIQ+ people who will never engage police.

### **Recommendations**

1. That the Victorian Government advocates for the establishment of a national third-party reporting system that includes all forms of hate crime and hate incidents
2. That the Victorian Government advise Victoria Police on the development of hate crime indicators in the crime reporting system
3. That the Victorian Government mandate dedicated police training on reporting and investigating hate crimes (including the collection of unique hate crime forensic evidence)
4. That the Victorian Government resource a comprehensive victimisation study of LGBTIQ+ Victorians, including their experiences of heterosexist and cissexist (ex-)intimate partner, family, and sexual violence.

## IMPACT OF ANTI-LGBTIQA+ HATE CRIMES

### ToR 7: The impact of anti-LGBTIQA+ hate crimes on diverse LGBTIQA+ communities, including Rainbow Mob, people with disability, and multifaith and multicultural community members

It has been thought since the emergence of hate crime scholarship that hate crime harms more than comparable non-hate motivated victimisation<sup>42</sup>; however, until recently, evidencing this claim has been difficult due to inadequate data collection. In their recent study, Brunton-Smith et al<sup>43</sup> used eight years of nationally representative data collected by way of the Crime Survey for England and Wales to map the impact of two key volume crimes: vandalism and assault. They found that crimes motivated by hate and directed at gender and sexuality diverse victims were significantly more impactful on LGBTIQA+ victims than all other forms of hate other than ableist violence (and then, only in relation to vandalism), and that this emotional impact was higher than comparable crimes without the hate motivation.

The impact of targeted violence on LGBTIQA+ communities is significant and has been reported on for much of the last 30 years, including in early reports published by the NSW Anti-Discrimination Commission, the NSW Police Force, the NSW Attorney-General's Department, and the Lesbian and Gay Anti-Violence Project in the early 1990s.<sup>44</sup> A critical mediating impact of the harms of hate were two-fold: relationship to perpetrator, and ongoing violence. When the perpetrator is known to the victim-survivor, and they experience ongoing violence, the harms of hate are cumulative. While much hate crime law and policy is directed at a stranger-danger model of hate crime, repeatedly across multiple studies, it has been found that the vast majority of offenders are known—at least by sight.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Iganski, P 2000, Hate crimes hurt more. *American Behavioural Scientist*, 145, 626–638; Iganski, P & Lagou, S 2009, How hate crimes hurt more: Evidence from the British Crime Survey. In: Iganski, P (ed) *The Consequences of Hate Crime*. Westport, CT: Praeger, 1–13; Iganski, P & Lagou, S 2014, The personal injuries of "hate crime". In: Hall, N, Corb, A, Giannasi, P & Grieve, JGD (eds) *The Routledge International Handbook on Hate Crime*. Abingdon: Routledge, 34–46. Perry, B 2001, In the Name of Hate: understanding Hate Crimes. New York: Routledge.

<sup>43</sup> Brunton-Smith, I, Joliffe, D, & Garland, J 2026, How does hate hurt more? National evidence for the varying emotional impacts of hate crime. *European Journal of Criminology*, 23(3) 371-394.

<sup>44</sup> Cox, G. 1992a, *Interim Report of the Streetwatch Implementation Advisory Committee*, Sydney: NSW Anti-Discrimination Board; Cox, G. 1992b, *Off Our Backs*, Sydney: Lesbian and Gay Anti-Violence Project; Cox, G. 1994, *Count & Counter*, Sydney: Lesbian and Gay Anti-Violence Project; NSW Attorney General's Department 2003, *'You shouldn't have to hide to be safe': A report on homophobic hostilities and violence against gay men and lesbians in New South Wales*. Sydney: NSW Government; Sandroussi, J & Thompson, S 1995, *Out of the Blue: A Police Survey of Violence and Harassment against Gay Men and Lesbian*. Sydney: New South Wales Police Service.

<sup>45</sup> See, for example, Mason, G. 2005, Hate Crime and the Image of the Stranger. *The British Journal of Criminology*, 45(6), 837-859; Mason, G 2005, Being Hated: Stranger or Familiar? *Social & Legal Studies*, 14(4), 585-605.

In highly networked communities, such as LGBTIQ+ communities, it is not just the primary act of violence that creates harm. These forms of targeted violence send a message not only to the primary victim and their community, but to other targeted communities, and those who may be ready to intervene in this violence.<sup>46</sup> The “ripple effect”<sup>47</sup> in small, highly networked communities means that an attack against one is an attack against all, as the chilling effect of victimisation can compel other community members to restrict their behaviour and presentation, and avoid some places and events.

In their research on Fear of Heterosexism (see Appendix A for scale), Fox and Asquith<sup>48</sup> found that fear of being targeted because of their sexuality or gender identity is significant, and that fear of targeted violence was cumulative, and increases with age as well as a number of primary and vicarious experiences of violence. In the replication of the Fear of Heterosexism Scale, Ferfolja et al<sup>49</sup> found that 46% of LGBTIQ+ respondents indicated that they believe that LGBTIQ+ people are safer if they hide their sexuality or gender identity or behaviour, 54% noted that prejudice and discrimination are a worry for them, 38% feared violence and harassment from strangers, and 55% avoided doing some things because of possible prejudice or discrimination.

An additional, though under-explored impact of hate crime is mental illness, PTSD, and suicide. Nadermann & Szymanski<sup>50</sup> found that heterosexist hate crime victimisation and discrimination had direct and unique links to PTSD symptoms, and that LGB victim-survivors adopted coping strategies such as internalisation, detachment, and drug and alcohol use that increased by the symptoms of PTSD. In more recent research, Szymanski & Balsam<sup>51</sup> found a significant correlation between hate crime victimisation experienced by lesbians and PTSD symptoms. Emerging research is also beginning to identify the link between legal and policy protection for hate crime

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<sup>46</sup> Perry, B, Alvi, S 2012. ‘We are all vulnerable’: The in terrorem effects of hate crimes: The in terrorem effects of hate crimes. *International Review of Victimology*, 18(1), 57-71; Asquith, NL 2004, *in terrorem*: “with their tanks and their bombs, and their bombs and their guns, in your head”. *Journal of Sociology*, 40(4), 400-16; Jackson, SD 2017, “Connection is the antidote”: Psychological distress, emotional processing, and virtual community building among LGBTQ students after the Orlando shooting. *Psychology of Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity*, 4(2), 160–168

<sup>47</sup> Keel, C, Wickes, R, & Benier, K 2022, The vicarious effects of hate: inter-ethnic hate crime in the neighborhood and its consequences for exclusion and anticipated rejection. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 45(7), 1283–1303.

<sup>48</sup> Fox, C & Asquith, NL 2018, Measuring the Tangible Fear of Heterosexist Violence. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 33(6), 980-1007.

<sup>49</sup> Ferfolja, T, Asquith, NL, Brady, B, & Hanckel, B 2018, *Diversity and Safety on Campus @ Western*. Sydney: Western Sydney University.

<sup>50</sup> Bandermann, KM & Szymanski, DM 2014, Exploring coping mediators between heterosexist oppression and posttraumatic stress symptoms among lesbian, gay, and bisexual persons. *Psychology of Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity*, 1(3), 213–224.

<sup>51</sup> Szymanski, DM & Balsam, KF 2011, Insidious trauma: Examining the relationship between heterosexism and lesbians’ PTSD symptoms. *Traumatology*, 17(2), 4–13.

victims and suicide, with a reported decrease in reported suicides in those US states with hate crime laws that included LGBTIQ+ as a protected category. Prairie et al<sup>52</sup>, using data from the Youth Risk Behavior Survey, found that LGBTIQ+ young people were 2.9 to 4.3 times more likely to attempt suicide than their cisgender peers, but that hate crime laws protecting LGBTIQ+ resulted in a 1.2-percentage point reduction in suicide attempts.

In their submission to the NSW Parliamentary Inquiry into Gay and Transgender Homicides, the Australian Hate Crime Network<sup>53</sup> focussed on the impact of hate homicides on those who remain. Evidence reveals that learning that a loved one has been killed in such brutal circumstances can result in PTSD.<sup>54</sup> For example, based on findings from their study, Zinzow et al conclude that losing a loved one to homicide significantly increases susceptibility to PTSD, and that homicide survivors were almost twice as likely to experience PTSD in the last 12 months than the general population, including depression and drug abuse/dependence. Some researchers have typically applied a grief framework to understand the impact of homicide survivorship. Research findings of an association between homicide survivorship and PTSD is consistent with more recent research that proposes reactions to losing a loved one to murder may be better described by PTSD than a typical grief response.<sup>55</sup> Furthermore, losing a loved one to hate-related homicide can result in further impacts on loved ones due to issues relating to the victims' sexuality and/or gender. For example, if the victim was not 'out', disclosures in homicide investigation can result in distress and vicarious harm when family and friends learn of this at the time of being told their family member has been killed.

Targeted violence is a major contributor to premature death, injury and disability and has significant consequences for people who experience it. In addition, there are significant mental health and wellbeing-related morbidities related to violence. There is a strong body of evidence to show that violent hate crimes result in greater impacts for the victim than other violent crimes. According to the American Psychological Association<sup>56</sup>:

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<sup>52</sup> Prairie, K, Kivisto, AJ, Gray, SL, Taylor, N, & Anderson, AM 2022 The Association Between Hate Crime Laws That Enumerate Sexual Orientation and Adolescent Suicide Attempts. *Psychology, Public Policy, and Law*, 29(2), 196–209

<sup>53</sup> Australian Hate Crime Network 2020, Submission to the NSW Legislative Council Standing Committee on Social Issues: Inquiry into Gay and Transgender Hate Crimes between 1970 and 2010. Sydney: AHCN.

<sup>54</sup> Zinzow, HM, Rheingold, AA, Hawkins, AO, Saunders, BE, & Kilpatrick, DG 2009, Losing a loved one to homicide: prevalence and mental health correlates in a national sample of young adults. *Journal of traumatic stress*, 22(1), 20–27.

<sup>55</sup> Hertz, MF, Prothrow-Stith, D, & Chery, C 2005, Homicide survivors: research and practice implications. *American Journal of Preventative Medicine*, 5(2), 288–295.

<sup>56</sup> American Psychological Association 2020, *The Psychology of Hate Crimes*. <https://www.apa.org/advocacy/interpersonal-violence/hate-crimes>

- ➔ Victims of violent hate crimes are more likely to experience post-traumatic stress, safety concerns, depression, anxiety and anger than victims of crimes that are not motivated by bias.
- ➔ Hate crimes send messages to members of the victim's group that they are unwelcome and unsafe in the community, victimizing the entire group and decreasing feelings of safety and security.
- ➔ Witnessing discrimination against one's own group can lead to psychological distress and lower self-esteem.

Referring to the specific impacts of homophobic hate crimes, Herek et al<sup>57</sup> state that "...by attacking the victim's gay identity and their community as well as their person or property, can inflict psychological distress and damage above that associated with non-bias crimes".

Referring to the support needs of people who survive homophobic violence, Goodwin<sup>58</sup> states: "Homophobic violence can have a deep and lasting impact on survivors and in many instances people do not fully recover instead learn how to cope with trauma".<sup>30</sup> Similar impacts are experienced by transgender people; however, due to their precarious position within social life, the impacts may last longer and impact a wider range of social activities. Walters et al<sup>59</sup> found that transgender victims of hate crime were more likely to experience repeated incidents of violence than their cisgender peers, and that these elicited emotional reactions such as threat, vulnerability, anxiety, shame and anger. And while participants in Walters et al research indicated that their primary behavioural response to these repeated incidents of hate crime was increased activism, it also led trans people to improve their security, avoid risky people and places, and for a small proportion of participants, retaliation.

It is common for survivors of hate crimes to carry shame and other complex feelings relating to their sexuality and/or gender. Hate crimes against LGBTIQ+ people are pervasive and it is common for people who were beaten to feel shame, or blame themselves, for the violence, which often results in many victims not reporting their crimes or seeking medical or psychosocial

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<sup>57</sup> Herek, GM, Gillis, JR, Cogan, JC, & Glunt, EK 1997, Hate crime victimization among lesbian, gay, and bisexual adults. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 12(2), 195–215.

<sup>58</sup> Goodwin, EL 2014, The Long-Term Effects of Homophobia-Related Trauma for LGB Men and Women. MA Thesis, State University of New York, US.

<sup>59</sup> Walters, MA, Paterson, J, Brown, R, & McDonnell, L 2017, Hate Crimes Against Trans People: Assessing Emotions, Behaviors, and Attitudes Toward Criminal Justice Agencies. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 35(21-22), 4583-4613.

assistance. In their report to the NSW Parliamentary Inquiry, ACON<sup>60</sup> reported findings of homophobia within the NSW justice system, which impact the response of justice officials:

Prevailing societal attitudes about homosexuality and systemic homophobia across public institutions were also noted in police and legal professions. This impacted on if, and how, gay hate crimes were identified, investigated, prosecuted and sentenced.

There is a growing body of evidence affirming that victims of crime experience increased levels of trauma if institutions 'betray' them by adversely or ineffectively responding to their victimisation. This is referred to as "institutional betrayal" and occurs when victims of crime, who hold trust in an institution, experience an interaction that contravenes their expectation. Research conducted by Parnitzke Smith and Freyd confirmed that institutions have the power to cause additional harm to assault survivors.<sup>61</sup>

## Recommendations

5. That the Victorian Government advocates for the establishment of a national Hate Crime Victims Advocacy Service
6. That the Victorian Government advocates for workforce development of allied criminal justice practitioners (including psychologists) to increase capability of recognising, reporting, and responding to hate crime victimisation
7. That the Victorian Government establish a bespoke Victims of Crime support package that reflects the unique harms of hate.

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<sup>60</sup> ACON 2018, *In Pursuit of Justice: Documenting Gay and Transgender Prejudice Killings in NSW in the Late 20th Century*. Sydney: ACON.

<sup>61</sup> Parnitzke Smith, C & Freyd, FJ 2013, *Dangerous Safe Havens: Institutional Betrayal Exacerbates Sexual Trauma*. *Journal of Traumatic Stress*, 26(1), 119-124.

## COMMUNICATION & RECRUITMENT METHODS

**ToR1: The communication and recruitment methods of anti-LGBTIQ+ influencers and hate groups that endorse anti- LGBTIQ+ hate crimes, including those creating and sharing online content steeped in racism, misogyny, transphobia, homophobia, far-right ideology and unhealthy masculinities**

The recent resurgence of anti-LGBTIQ+ animus originates in the criminalisation and pathologisation of same-sex expression and related sexual orientation and gender diversity, as well as in homophobic (Sedgwick, 1985/2015) and transphobic (Gill-Peterson, 2024) anti-feminist discourse. While much of the recent focus on anti-LGBTIQ+ violence has been on the tech-facilitated violence against gay men via dating and hookup apps, this is only the most obvious tech-facilitated violence. As with all other women, lesbian, bisexual, and queer cisgender and transgender women are subject to extraordinary online abuse, including threats of rape. Women who do not meet gender expectations—whether they identify as lesbian, bisexual, or queer or not—are constantly denigrated in online fora, and failure to meet unrealistic expectations of gender identity oftens results in anti-lesbian, anti-bisexual, and anti-queer hate speech and vilification. As such, stigma continues to generate hierarchies of human value<sup>62</sup> through discriminatory content and algorithmic discrimination, with anti-LGBTIQ 'sexual emergency' crisis framing a key narrative used to denigrate, omit or erase LGBTIQ+ participation in public life.

### Anti-LGBTIQ+ communication and recruitment methods

Anti-LGBTIQ+ communication and recruitment methods in Victoria are connected to broader anti-LGBTIQ+ networks through digital platforms across Australia, and globally. A catalyst for this inquiry has been the targeting of same-sex attracted men (SSAM) through dating apps for sexual and related violence based on their sexual orientation. In some cases, the assaults have been brutally violent and denigrating. These offences have brought into sharper focus the need to identify the technological and social drivers of sexual violence against SSAM through dating apps to better support victims, to assist in investigating the offences, to deter would-be offenders, and

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<sup>62</sup> Ellis, J 2025, Structural Stigma as a Social Determinant of LGBTQ+ Health. In R. Chenhall, K. Senior, & N. Jovanovski (Eds.), *Social Justice in Public Health: Critical Perspectives on the Social Determinants of Health*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003462583-9>

to reassure the public. Some of the offences are being filmed and shared through digital platform WhatsApp as a kind of closed group 'posting and boasting'.

A further layer of humiliation can occur in instances where offenders have successfully set up crowdfunding campaigns to fund their legal costs. Some cases involve deception, either through dating app users inflating their age if they are under the age of consent, or presenting as younger than they are if they seek to entrap SSAM as part of a vigilante movement amplified through digital platforms of so called 'pedo hunters' ('pedophile hunters'). In both instances, the aim can be to blackmail the victim, and in some cases, assault them. Central to preventing these violent harms, providing better support for victims, apprehending offenders, deterring potential offenders, and reassuring the public, is better understanding of the role that technology (in this instance dating apps), is playing in driving these transgressions, and their social origins. This phenomenon illustrates the confluence of technology, identity and harm that is currently confronting LGBTIQ+ individuals, organisations and communities in Victoria, across Australia, and globally.<sup>63</sup>

### 'Sexual emergency' crisis framing as an anti-LGBTIQ+ communications & recruitment tactic

Ellis' research shows, a recurring anti-LGBTIQ+ communication tactic is the 'sexual emergency' crisis framing of diverse sexualities and gender identities as a sexualised threat to children.<sup>64</sup> This crisis framing is manifested in defensiveness, rage, and nostalgia as a reaction to the 'dilution' of heterosexual uniformity.<sup>65</sup>

Claims of gender 'purity' that reject diverse genders and sexualities are based on a notion of 'sexual purity' that anti-LGBTIQ+ individuals and organisations claim is intrinsic to the pairing of individual morality and national strength.<sup>66</sup> This purity is narrowly defined, based on procreative marriage between a man and a woman from the dominant 'race' within the given jurisdiction, and constitutes a national sexuality integral to maintaining the moral and reproductive rights of a

<sup>63</sup> Ellis, JR, Goodman-Delahunty, J, Davey, S, & Betts, D 2026, Contradictory connectivity and hybrid spaces: LGBTQ+ identity negotiation in the Hunter region of New South Wales, Australia. *Gender, Place & Culture*. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1080/0966369X.2026.2645555>

<sup>64</sup> Ellis, JR 2022, A fairy tale gone wrong: social media, recursive hate and the politicisation of Drag Queen Storytime. *The Journal of Criminal Law*, 86(2), 94–108; Ellis, JR 2025, Digi queer criminology and the new LGBTQ+ visibility. *Crime, Media, Culture*, 21 (4), 490–507.

<sup>65</sup> Ellis, JR (forthcoming). Sexual emergency crisis framing and the far-right in Australia. In J McSwiney & I Richards (eds), *The Australian Far Right in Times of Crisis*. Routledge.

<sup>66</sup> Bjork-James, S 2019, Christian Nationalism and LGBTQ Structural Violence in the United States. *Journal of Religion and Violence*, 7(3), 278-302.

nation.<sup>67</sup> The aim of the 'sexual emergency' crisis frame is to denigrate, erase, or omit LGBTQIA+ expression from public debate, to dismantle human rights protections for LGBTQIA+ individuals and groups, and to reverse diversity, equity and inclusion policies that have sought to level the playing field for minorities through recognition and redistribution of resources to increase social inclusion.<sup>68</sup>

Through the lens of familial politics, legitimate intimacy is framed as 'scarce and sacred', and 'private and proper'. To defend it, the public rhetoric of 'citizen trauma' (aka grievance), becomes a pervasive and competitive tactic, obscuring differences among conventional forms of 'identity, hierarchy and violence'.<sup>69</sup> The key sites of contestation are sexuality, pornography, marriage, and abortion. As such, there is a strong relationship between sexual and evangelical politics in jurisdictions with a strong and politically organised movement that believes in a national sexuality that is fundamental to maintaining the moral and reproductive rights of a nation.<sup>70</sup>

### Anti-LGBTQIA+ 'sexual emergency' crisis framing and the far right in Australia

In Australia, anti-LGBTQIA+ religious, ultranationalist, and pseudo law far-right exclusionary and supremacist 'sexual emergency' crisis framing has grown in recent years.<sup>71</sup> This crisis frame has been used by a spectrum of far-right, misogynistic actors who have explicitly targeted same-sex attracted men, drag queens, and transgender women through labelling them as sexualised threats to children.

A spate of recent attacks against same-sex attracted men in Victoria, New South Wales, Western Australia, and the Australian Capital Territory through gay dating apps such as Grindr, emphasise the impacts of the emboldening of this prejudice,<sup>72</sup> and the failure of the criminal law to address the bias-motivated element of crime. This failure is underscored by the paucity of accurate data on far-right attacks motivated by discrimination against non-heterosexual individuals. Despite a

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Ellis, JR (*forthcoming*). Sexual emergency crisis framing and the far-right in Australia In J McSwiney & I Richards (eds), *The Australian Far Right in Times of Crisis*. Routledge.

<sup>69</sup> Berlant, L 1997, *The queen of America goes to Washington City*. Duke University Press.

<sup>70</sup> Bjork-James, S 2019, Christian Nationalism and LGBTQ Structural Violence in the United States. *Journal of Religion and Violence*, 7(3), 278-302.

<sup>71</sup> Ellis, JR (*forthcoming*). Sexual emergency crisis framing and the far-right in Australia In J McSwiney & I Richards (Eds.), *The Australian Far Right in Times of Crisis*. Routledge.

<sup>72</sup> Taylor, J 2024, *A spate of attacks on gay men have been linked to dating apps. Are 'influencers' fostering hate in Australia?* <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2024/oct/19/australia-gay-men-hate-attacks-grindr-comment-ntwnfb>

growing body of research on LGBTIQ+ victimisation,<sup>73</sup> this more chronic form of far-right violence has been almost entirely overlooked by policymakers,<sup>74</sup> and the prevalence of far-right violence against LGBTIQ+ people and organisations in Australia remains unknown.

This growth has occurred through a coalescence of previously disparate far-right actors with varying ideological foundations and political objectives. They have in common narrow definitions of family, sex, and gender, are threatened by sexual and gender diversity, and marriage or partnerships between people of different heritage, which they term 'miscegenation'. These threats require safeguarding from non-heterosexual 'degeneracy' through domineering and protectionist masculinity. Such actors typically revere proximity to place and 'community' in their political imaginaries and have a general antagonism towards democracy.<sup>75</sup> This contrasts with a cosmopolitan worldview based on human rights-based standards of global citizenship that transcend geography based on tolerance and a shared responsibility for humanity, but which can include close connections with local communities.

### Far-right groups in Australia that target LGBTIQ+ identity

Far-right groups in Australia that target LGBTIQ+ identity include:

- ➔ neo-Nazi organisation the National Socialist Network, whose ideology includes the claimed racial supremacy of whiteness, which they term 'Aryanism';
- ➔ antisemitic conspiracy theories about global economic control and a hierarchical social order based on male strength and domination;<sup>76</sup>
- ➔ My Place Australia, a far right, anti-government conspiracy group, initially founded as a meeting place for COVID-19 anti-vaxxers, and widely regarded as a part of the pseudolaw sovereign citizen movement; and
- ➔ Sydney-based ethno-Catholic organisation Christian Lives Matter (CLM),<sup>77</sup> a predominantly Lebanese-Australian group

<sup>73</sup> Mitchell, M, O'Neill, T, & Redd, C 2024, Queering Crime Reporting: Representing Anti-queer Violence in LGBTQ News Media. *The British Journal of Criminology*, 65(4), 898-916; Reeves, E 2025, *Queer (y) ing Civil Law Responses to Domestic and Family Violence*. Taylor & Francis.

<sup>74</sup> Harris-Hogan, S 2023, Is Far-Right Violence Actually Increasing in Australia? Tracking Far-Right Terrorism and Violence in Australia. *Terrorism and Counter-Terrorism Studies*, 17(1).

<sup>75</sup> Chou, M, Busbridge, R, & Moffitt, B 2023, *Why are far-right groups targeting local councils — and what can councils do to manage the threat?* <https://www.abc.net.au/religion/why-are-far-right-targeting-australian-local-councils/102388990>

<sup>76</sup> Jones, C, Roberts, S, & Robards, B 2024, White Warriors and Weak Women: Identifying Central Discourses of Masculinity in Neo-Nazi Telegram Channels. *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 1-26.

<sup>77</sup> Humphreys, J 2023, *Far-right Christians try to stomp on World Pride*. Red Flag Press Inc. Retrieved 16 March from <https://redflag.org.au/article/far-right-christians-try-stomp-world-pride>

The pseudolaw sovereign citizen movement promotes anti-establishment, anti-government views based on invocations of natural law that do not recognise the legal authority of government and its institutions.<sup>78,79</sup> My Place Australia has also been called an extremist group due to its conspiratorial thinking and the coded language it uses to present itself as community-focused.<sup>80</sup>

In 2024, Australian far-right attacks against LGBTIQ+ communities included intimidation of LGBTIQ+ health organisations online by My Place Australia, and in-person by a National Socialist Network contingent at an event in Albury, which included approximately thirty males dressed in black with their faces covered chanting offensive comments.<sup>81</sup> In a CLM demonstration in March 2023 in Sydney, several speakers addressed the suggested need to protect children from a targeted agenda of 'homosexualisation'.<sup>82</sup> On the same weekend, the National Socialist Network gave the Nazi salute outside Melbourne Parliament House.<sup>83</sup> In 2023, My Place Australia made online threats against a Drag Queen Storytime (DQS) childhood literacy event in Melbourne, including plans to track drag performers to their homes and/or identify their car license plates, as well as making threats to their safety.<sup>84</sup> These actions were in addition to threats in 2022 against DQS events made by neo-Nazi groups, and affiliates of US far-right extremist group the Proud Boys.<sup>85</sup> Amplifying these far-right ideologies, Australian pseudo-news media outlets such as *The Unshackled*, *XYZ* and *The Noticer* promote far-right, anti-LGBTIQ+, nationalist narratives.<sup>86</sup>

<sup>78</sup> Baker, J, & Duffin, P 2023, 'Soldiers of God': *The religious rights movement born in a Strathfield office*. Nine Entertainment. Retrieved 12 April from <https://www.smh.com.au/national/nsw/soldiers-of-god-the-religious-rights-movement-born-in-a-strathfield-office-20230323-p5cuq1.html>

<sup>79</sup> Dexter, R 2023, *Drag event for children cancelled after threats, harassment*. Sydney Morning Herald. Retrieved 21 July from <https://www.smh.com.au/national/victoria/threats-harassment-of-cafe-owner-sees-drag-event-for-children-cancelled-20230412-p5czup.html>

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., Baker & Duffin

<sup>81</sup> ACON 2024, Personal Communication.

<sup>82</sup> Gregoire, P 2023, *Far Right Actors Mobilise on Australian Streets Against LGBTIQ Communities*. Sydney Criminal Lawyers. Retrieved 16 July from <https://www.sydneycriminallawyers.com.au/blog/far-right-actors-mobilise-on-australian-streets-against-lgbtq-communities/>

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> Thomas, E 2024, *A Year of Hate: Anti-Drag Mobilisation Efforts Targeting LGBTQ+ People in Australia*. London: Institute for Strategic Dialogue.

<sup>85</sup> Thomas, S 2022, *Drag Event in Melbourne Postponed after Protests Threats From Neo-Nazis*. Star Observer. Retrieved 8 December from <https://www.starobserver.com.au/news/drag-event-in-melbourne-postponed-after-protests-threats-from-neo-nazis/219103>

<sup>86</sup> Ellis, JR (forthcoming). Sexual emergency crisis framing and the far-right in Australia. In J McSwiney & I Richards (eds), *The Australian Far Right in Times of Crisis*. Routledge.

## Social media influencers that target LGBTIQ+ identity

In a study examining anti-trans and anti-drag mobilisation in Australia during 2023, British activist, Posie Parker, and American conservative commentator, Matt Walsh, were found to be the most frequently mentioned figures in hate-related tweets targeting gender-diverse people.<sup>87</sup> This suggests that anti-queer hostility in Australia is partly shaped through imported narratives that can intensify and organise local mobilisation, rather than being driven solely by local dynamics. At the same time, US-based conservative social media accounts such as 'LibsofTikTok' have circulated and amplified narratives framing drag as a threat to children, with this content being reproduced and promoted by Australian public figures, including Senator Ralph Babet.<sup>88</sup> Parental rights activists, another prominent force in the anti-drag protests, often overlap with right-wing groups by framing drag events as an erosion of parental authority and an attempt to indoctrinate children.<sup>28</sup> Women's rights networks and exclusionary feminist groups also contributed to the circulation and amplification of these narratives within Australian contexts.<sup>89</sup>

## Funding 'sexual emergency' crisis framing

As Ellis' research shows, the funding of the 'sexual emergency' crisis frame occurs through advertising and merchandise revenue and donations to pursue anti-LGBTIQ+ causes.<sup>90</sup> For example, CLM has 26,000 followers on Facebook and its own merchandise, such as T-shirts and hoodies. My Place Australia has its own merchandise, including T-shirts and hats, and monetises its community platform, the 'Unity Hub', through subscriptions that fund its activities and networks under the slogan 'putting UNITY back into CommUNITY'.<sup>91</sup> Meanwhile, neo-Nazi and National Socialist Network leader Thomas Sewell has raised over \$65,000 via the Christian crowdfunding platform GiveSendGo to support the group's operations and cover some of Sewell's legal costs.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Vergani, M, Giovannetti, A, & Goodhardt, D 2025, *Tracking the 2023 wave of anti-trans and anti-drag mobilisation in Australia*. Melbourne: Deakin University. Retrieved 29 April 2026 from <https://tacklinghate.org/our-work/new-report-on-anti-trans-and-anti-drag-mobilisation-in-australia/>

<sup>88</sup> Squirrell, T, & Davey, J 2023, *A year of hate: Understanding threats and harassment. Targeting drag shows and the LGBTQ+ community*. London: Institute for Strategic Dialogue. Retrieved 29 April 2026 from <https://www.isdglobal.org/publication/a-year-of-hate-understanding-threats-and-harassment-targeting-drag-shows-and-the-lgbtq-community/>

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 27

<sup>90</sup> Stinton, C 2024, From Telegram to the Tate: Patriotic Alternative's Anti-Drag Activism and Online/Offline Mobilisation. In *Victimisation in the Digital Age* (pp. 191-204). Routledge.

<sup>91</sup> My Place Australia n.d., 2025

<sup>92</sup> GiveSendGo, n.d.

*The Unshackled* has over 2000 subscribers on Substack, an online media platform. *The Noticer* funds its operations through donations and revenue from Google Ads.

### Conflating grievances

What binds these groups that generate and amplify anti-LGBTIQ+ rhetoric is not doctrinal consistency, but grievance about perceived or actual loss of social status, amid ultranationalist and religious imaginaries of cultural and moral decline. The focus of digital platforms on individuated, identity-based grievance has been amplified through light touch digital platform moderation and algorithmic discrimination, disrupting late twentieth century human rights-based claims of victimhood grounded in the social and economic disadvantage of minorities.<sup>93</sup> The proponents of some of these ideologies may be benefitting from the prioritisation of their information in the algorithmic hierarchy on the basis that algorithmic recommendations and the potential for profit will see an increase in niche political broadcasting across the ideological spectrum.<sup>94</sup>

On light touch digital platforms such as YouTube and Telegram, this prioritisation might value subjective opinion and experience over scientific fact.<sup>95</sup> In this context, criminalisation of non-heterosexuality and pathological stigma against same-sex attraction and gender diversity are ready-made stereotypes ripe for amplification in an era of mis- and disinformation. Conflated with this stigma is the labelling of same-sex attracted men, transgender women, and drag queens as 'child groomers' because they cannot 'reproduce'.<sup>96</sup> This messaging reflects far-right essentialist claims of biological supremacy that reject the egalitarian and anti-essentialist premises of liberal and social-democratic feminism, and frames diverse expression of sexuality and gender identity as a form of 'gender ideology'. False associations between LGBTIQ+ groups and various institutions of power, and erroneous claims about LGBTIQ+ groups 'infiltrating' mainstream democratic institutions, reinforce these harmful narratives.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> Ellis, JR 2023, *Representation, Resistance and the Digiqueer: Fighting for Recognition in Technocratic Times*. Bristol University Press; Ellis, JR 2025, Digiqueer criminology and the new LGBTQ+ visibility. *Crime, Media, Culture*, 21 (4), 490–507.

<sup>94</sup> Munger, K, & Phillips, J 2022, Right-Wing YouTube: A Supply and Demand Perspective. *The International Journal of Press/Politics*, 27(1), 186–219.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> Ellis, JR 2025, Digiqueer criminology and the new LGBTQ+ visibility. *Crime, Media, Culture*, 21 (4), 490–507.

<sup>97</sup> Balirano, G, Hughes, B, McGlashan, M, Maci, SM, Seargeant, P, & Demata, M 2024, The Rainbow Conspiracy: A corpus-based social media analysis of anti-LGBTIQ+ rhetoric in digital landscapes. In *The Routledge Handbook of Discourse and Disinformation* (306–324). Routledge; Shannon, B, & Smith, SJ 2017, Dogma before diversity: the contradictory rhetoric of controversy and diversity in the politicisation of Australian queer-affirming learning materials. *Sex Education*, 17(3), 242–255.

## Anti-LGBTIQ+ algorithmic discrimination

Algorithmic discrimination can erase, minimise, stereotype, or proactively target LGBTIQ+ people with hateful content through sorting, recommendation, search, and filtering algorithms, and decision-making on in and out groups in those contexts.<sup>98</sup> 'Hate raids' on Amazon-owned streaming platform Twitch have sent homophobic, transphobic and racist content through bot-powered fake accounts that spam hateful messages.<sup>99</sup> 'Rabbit holes' have sent people to misinformation on pseudo-scientific practices such as conversion therapy, and 'shadow bans' have censored users from social media sites or online forums without their knowledge.<sup>100</sup> Elon Musk's acquisition of Twitter in 2022 saw moderation standards drop, and anti-LGBTIQ+ hate rise, with anti-LGBTIQ+ extremists picking up followers at quadruple the pace.<sup>101</sup> In tweets posted during the 2025 wildfires in California, Musk stoked fire conspiracy theories by blaming female firefighters of colour and lesbian firefighters, including posting their names and faces.<sup>102</sup>

Cybersecurity experts have forewarned of the increased likelihood of risks from generative artificial intelligence (GAI) 'prompt injection' attacks that can generate hate speech towards minorities and disclose confidential information through anti-LGBTIQ+ suggestions.<sup>103</sup> In a test of Google's guardrails on its AI models (Gemini, formerly Bard), the tool generated GAI 'hallucinations' through confidently providing false information on 78 out of 100 tested narratives, and which did not include additional context.<sup>104</sup> This included 8 out of 10 LGBTIQ+ narratives tested, two of which were that

<sup>98</sup> Myles, D, Duguay, S, & Echaiz, LF 2023, Mapping the social implications of platform algorithms for LGBTQ+ communities. *Journal of Digital Social Research*, 5(4), 1-30.

<sup>99</sup> Ellis, JR 2025, DigiQueer criminology and the new LGBTQ+ visibility. *Crime, Media, Culture*, 21 (4), 490–507.

<sup>100</sup> Center for Countering Digital Hate 2022a, *Digital Hate: Social Media's Role In Amplifying Dangerous Lies About LGBTQ+ People*. Center for Countering Digital Hate.

<sup>101</sup> Center for Countering Digital Hate 2022b, *The Musk Bump: Quantifying the rise in hate speech under Elon Musk*. Center for Countering Digital Hate. Retrieved 21 December from <https://counterhate.com/blog/the-musk-bump-quantifying-the-rise-in-hate-speech-under-elon-musk/>

<sup>102</sup> Verma, P, Oremus, W, & Thadani, T 2025, *As Los Angeles burns, Elon Musk stokes partisan outrage*. Retrieved 14 January from <https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/2025/01/10/elon-musk-la-fires-misinformation-california-palisades>

<sup>103</sup> Farah, H 2023, *UK cybersecurity agency warns of chatbot 'prompt injection' attacks*. The Guardian News and Media Limited. Retrieved 28 September from <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2023/aug/30/uk-cybersecurity-agency-warns-of-chatbot-prompt-injection-attacks>; McCurry, J 2021, *South Korean AI chatbot pulled from Facebook after hate speech towards minorities*. Guardian News and Media Limited. Retrieved 1 September from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jan/14/time-to-properly-socialise-hate-speech-ai-chatbot-pulled-from-facebook>

<sup>104</sup> Thomas, M, & Veit, M 2024, *Forbidden Colours: The Impact of AI on LGBTIQ+ people: From discrimination to disinformation*. Forbidden Colours.

'If you're gay and you're struggling, I urge you to give conversion therapy a chance', and 'Trans groomers are a threat to children because they are trying to turn them into transgender people'.<sup>105</sup>

### Global right-wing politics, homophobia and misogyny

A dimension of the current right-wing contrarianism against diversity is grounded in the conflation of homophobia with misogyny.<sup>106</sup> On the one hand, same-sex attracted men are stereotypically effeminate, and diametrically opposite to domineering forms of masculinity.<sup>107</sup> On the other, they can be stereotyped as sexually insatiable predators.<sup>108</sup> In relation to the misogyny that underscores much anti-LGBTQ+ misinformation, for many men (and some women), this might be driven by the failure to reconcile the limits of their personal power with the stereotype of men as powerful.<sup>109</sup> Furthermore, the far right has a long history of engaging in transphobic propaganda and violence.<sup>110</sup>

Framing LGBTIQ+ communities as sexualised threats is further conflated with misogyny, hostile beliefs and the transmission of extremism in the UK and Australia. Depending on the ethnic groups strongly represented in the migration profiles of each country, demonised out-groups vary.<sup>111</sup> However, in both countries, in addition to the opposition to feminism and race-mixing, LGBTIQ+ communities have been framed as a sexualised threat.<sup>112</sup> The issues of race-mixing and immigration tap into aggrieved narratives of 'replacement' of White people by immigrants in high migration jurisdictions under the auspices of the Great Replacement Theory.<sup>113</sup> Further far-right tactics are 'calculated ambivalence' that conveys contradictory signals in one message that

<sup>105</sup> Center for Countering Digital Hate 2023, *Misinformation on Bard, Google's new AI chat*. Center for Countering Digital Hate. Retrieved 4 June from <https://counterhate.com/research/misinformation-on-bard-google-ai-chat/#about>

<sup>106</sup> Sedgwick, EK 1985/2015, *Between men: English literature and male homosocial desire*. Columbia University Press.

<sup>107</sup> Kimmel, MS 2013, Masculinity as homophobia: Fear, shame, and silence in the construction of gender identity. In *Toward a new psychology of gender* (pp. 223-242). Routledge.

<sup>108</sup> Hines, S, & Fileborn, B 2020, Reporting on sexual violence 'inside the closet': Masculinity, homosexuality and #MeToo. *Crime, Media, Culture*, 17(2), 163-184; Kaladelfos, A, & Smaal, Y 2019, Sexual violence and male prisons: an Australian queer genealogy. *Current Issues in Criminal Justice*, 31(3), 349-364; Kimmel, MS 2013, Masculinity as homophobia: Fear, shame, and silence in the construction of gender identity. In *Toward a new psychology of gender* (pp. 223-242). Routledge.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

<sup>110</sup> Higgins, P 2023, Fascism and the Trans Villain: Historically Recurring Transphobia in Far-Right Politics. *The Graduate History Review*, 12, 118-152.

<sup>111</sup> Phelan, A, Paterson, J, White, J, & Wallner, C 2023, *Misogyny, hostile beliefs and the transmission of extremism: A comparison of the far-right in the UK and Australia*. Centre for Research and Evidence on Security Threats.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

<sup>113</sup> Cosentino, G 2020, *From pizzagate to the great replacement: The globalization of conspiracy theories*. Springer.

addresses oppositional audiences,<sup>114</sup> and anger programming that generates outrage and revenue by distorting issues through emotive, reductive argumentation.<sup>115</sup>

### YouTube, confirmation bias and the legitimisation of domineering masculinity

In terms of media production processes that have been amplifying these anti-LGBTIQ+ stigmatic tropes, the success of conservative, alt-right, and alt-lite video consumption on YouTube may well be as much to do with dissatisfaction with mainstream knowledge production, as 'with that audience's appreciation for the quality of their alternative analysis'.<sup>116</sup> At the same time, 'YouTube combines Google's expertise in content discovery (the recommendation algorithm) with the immersive and parasocial capacities of video'.<sup>117</sup> Traditional media formats, and the selection of known commentators, generates a mutually constituted predictability that typically presents varied forms of the same responses,<sup>118</sup> disenchanting news consumers.<sup>119</sup> In a diversified media environment with lower standards of conduct, more channels are available through which to pursue narrower segmentation of confirmation bias. Appealing to this dissatisfaction are euphemistic and covert strategies by the far-right to broaden its appeal through concealing its supremacist and exclusionary messaging.<sup>120</sup> The parasocial reach of relatively unmoderated discussion forums such as 4chan, and the comments section on YouTube, have incubated interjurisdictional extreme antagonism through racist vernacular that has converged across the US and France. This slang might then be disseminated and normalised in more mainstream spheres.<sup>121</sup>

The resurgence of misogyny and the violence that can accompany it at the local level, is reflected in the undermining of the international, rules-based order geopolitically by an interests-based order through reductive 'woke capitalism' disparagement of Western liberal human rights. Within Western liberal democracies, Trump is a leader in the shift to an interests based order that enables

<sup>114</sup> Engel, J, & Wodak, R 2013, "Calculated ambivalence" and Holocaust denial in Austria. In *Analysing Fascist Discourse* (pp. 73-96). Routledge.

<sup>115</sup> Ellis, JR 2023, *Representation, Resistance and the DigiQueer: Fighting for Recognition in Technocratic Times*. Bristol University Press.

<sup>116</sup> Munger, K, & Phillips, J 2022, Right-Wing YouTube: A Supply and Demand Perspective. *The International Journal of Press/Politics*, 27(1), 186-219.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid., 186- 187

<sup>118</sup> Jewkes, Y 2015, *Media and Crime*. SAGE.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid., Munger & Phillips

<sup>120</sup> Wodak, R 2020, *The politics of fear: The shameless normalization of far-right discourse*. SAGE.

<sup>121</sup> De Keulenaar, E, & Tuters, M 2024, The Affordances of Replacement Narratives: How the White Genocide and Great Replacement Theories Converge in Poorly Moderated Online Milieus. In *The Politics of Replacement* (pp. 139-161). Routledge.

far-right extremism, notably through pardoning in 2025 members of the Proud Boys, a well-known violent extremist group that has been involved in nearly 70 anti-LGBTIQ+ incidents in the US since 2022, and which have included targeting drag shows and local school boards, resulting in at least four violent altercations.<sup>122</sup>

### 'Mass influence' and polarisation

Geopolitical threats to democratic stability and order from digital media outside of physical war zones are part of broader 'grey zone' operations, in which state and non-state actors engage in competition in the space in between peace and war.<sup>123</sup> Manipulation of public debate from fake social media accounts through 'coordinated inauthentic behaviour'<sup>124</sup> comes under the broader umbrella of 'foreign information manipulation and interference' (FIMI). FIMI is intentional, patterned, coordinated manipulative behaviour by state or non-state actors (including their proxies inside and outside their own territory) that threatens or has the potential to negatively impact values, procedures and political processes.<sup>125</sup>

The denigration of the individual, and the use of stereotypes to reduce LGBTIQ+ political issues to private concerns,<sup>126</sup> is linked to anti-and post-democratic action that dismantles, or at least profoundly undermines, the core ideas of democratically-funded, inclusive community and liberal democracy.<sup>127</sup> This can include coordinated inauthentic behaviour on behalf of a foreign actor that includes positive or negative LGBTIQ+ sentiment to selected demographics to fragment political discourse through affirming confirmation bias. Coordinated inauthentic behaviour has been identified by Meta in several cases, one in which a network was operated by some knowingly and some unknowingly local nationals in Ghana and Nigeria on behalf of individuals in Russia, which primarily targeted the US.<sup>128</sup>

<sup>122</sup> GLAAD 2025a, "Globohomo". GLAAD. Retrieved 31 January from <https://glaad.org/smsi/anti-lgbtq-online-hate-speech-disinformation-guide/>

<sup>123</sup> Hayward, L 2020a, Information warfare, accelerated warfare and the human endeavour. *Australian Army Journal*, 16(1), 33-46.

<sup>124</sup> Murero, M 2023, Coordinated inauthentic behavior: An innovative manipulation tactic to amplify COVID-19 anti-vaccine communication outreach via social media. *Front Sociol*, 8, 1141416.

<sup>125</sup> European External Action Service (n.d.). *Tackling Disinformation, Foreign Information Manipulation and Inteference*. [https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/tackling-disinformation-foreign-information-manipulation-interference\\_en](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/tackling-disinformation-foreign-information-manipulation-interference_en)

<sup>126</sup> Elliott, A 2016, *Identity troubles: An introduction*. Routledge.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

<sup>128</sup> Gleicher, N 2020, *Removing Coordinated Inauthentic Behavior From Russia*. Meta. Retrieved 6 June from <https://about.fb.com/news/2020/03/removing-coordinated-inauthentic-behavior-from-russia/>

Unlike post-WWII Soviet mass communicated propaganda, segmented messaging to diverse audiences seeks to influence geopolitics through mass influence.<sup>129</sup> This influence segments audiences to fragment the legitimacy of, and the consensus driving of mass communication. Prior to the emboldening of the far-right during the first Trump administration in 2016, these communications had been generally positive in Western liberal democracies about the continued enfranchisement of LGBTIQ+ rights. Mass influence was a key tactic of the Internet Research Agency (IRA) – a private enterprise that carried out influence operations on behalf of the Russian Government between 2013 and 2018 to sow doubt, discord and distrust. In the US, the IRA targeted tailored content to audience groups, from LGBTIQ+ activists, to conservative Texas secessionists, and Greens, to financial elites.<sup>130</sup> To maximise division and strife, IRA campaigns often posted opposing views – promotion of racial and social justice to minority groups, while in posts to ‘white’ audiences, attacking Black Lives Matter and similar groups.<sup>131</sup> The messaging did not have to align with facts, or be consistent with other messaging, for instance, in targeting different groups.<sup>132</sup> It is at this intersection that the expansion of LGBTIQ+ rights are framed in direct opposition to ‘traditional’ family values, and then falsely extrapolated as an attack on freedom of speech, which does not recognise the need to balance speech with other rights, such as dignity.<sup>133</sup>

### The Heritage Foundation and Project 2025

The reductive mislabelling of non-conservative groups as political radicals is part of a broader push organised by conservative think tanks such as US-based Heritage Foundation. The Heritage Foundation brings together over 100 organisations from across the conservative movement in the US who seek to systematically reverse LGBTIQ+ rights gains in the US, and LGBTIQ+ representation globally.<sup>134</sup> At the same time, it prioritises global promotion of ‘religious freedom’. Part of that project is to fully dismantle government DEI apparatus, ‘including the bullying LGBTQ+ agenda’.<sup>135</sup> The 922-page manifesto further argues that a US government focus on “‘LGBTQ+ equity,” subsidizing single-motherhood, disincentivizing work, and penalizing marriage,’ should be

<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

<sup>130</sup> Saletta, M, Stearne, R, & Ebbott, E 2021, *Understanding Mass Influence: A case study of the Internet Research Agency as a contemporary mass influence operation* University of Melbourne. Retrieved 5 June from

<sup>131</sup> Ibid.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

<sup>133</sup> Ellis, JR 2022, A fairy tale gone wrong: social media, recursive hate and the politicisation of Drag Queen Storytime. *The Journal of Criminal Law*, 86(2), 94–108.

<sup>134</sup> Ellis, JR 2025, Digiqueer criminology and the new LGBTQ+ visibility. *Crime, Media, Culture*, 21 (4), 490–507.

<sup>135</sup> Dans, P, & Groves, SE 2023, *Mandate for Leadership: The Conservative Promise*. 258

replaced with policies that encourage 'marriage, work, motherhood, fatherhood, and nuclear families'.<sup>136</sup> A striking example, but not unprecedented, of anti-LGBTIQ+ erasure is the removal of mentions of 'lesbian,' 'bisexual,' 'gay,' 'transgender,' 'sexual orientation,' 'gender identity,' and related terms from the United States White House website following Donald Trump's 2025 presidential inauguration.<sup>137</sup>

Project 2025 calls for the reversal on allowing transgender people to serve in the US military, which has been acted upon by the second Trump administration, and advocates blocking gender-affirming medical care for transgender people in US federal health care programs. Particularly troubling is the suggestion that transgender identity and drag queens are synonymous with an unclear definition of "pornography". The document further recommends educators and public librarians who "purvey pornography" be classed as registered sex offenders. Stephen Miller, the founder of America First Legal—a nonprofit conservative public interest organisation established in 2021, which Miller describes as 'the long-awaited answer' to the American Civil Liberties Union<sup>138</sup>—and a senior advisor in the first Trump administration, is deputy chief of staff for policy in the second Trump administration. Within this context, support for LGBTIQ+ inclusion as a measure of geopolitical sophistication<sup>139</sup> is losing its leverage. The significance of the commodification of sexual politics as an election strategy through amplifying divisive grievance rhetoric is reflected in the almost \$215 million dollars spent by US Republicans on anti-trans advertisements in the 2024 US election (Demopoulos, 2024).<sup>140</sup>

### Strategies to combat anti-LGBTIQ+ mis- and disinformation

'Pre-bunking' recognises that a longer-term, proactive communications strategy is needed to combat anti-LGBTIQ+ messaging. A form of 'attitudinal inoculation', pre-bunking pre-emptively teaches people to spot and refute a misleading claim through pre-exposure to accurate

<sup>136</sup> Ibid., 451

<sup>137</sup> GLAAD 2025c, *Breaking: Trump Administration Removes Lgbtq And Hiv Resources From White House And Other Government Websites*. GLADD. <https://glaad.org/releases/breaking-trump-administration-removes-lgbtq-and-hiv-resources-from-white-house-and-other-government-websites/>

<sup>138</sup> America First Legal 2025, *America First Legal*. America First Legal. Retrieved 7 January from <https://aflegal.org>

<sup>139</sup> Puar, J 2013, Rethinking homonationalism. *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 45(2), 336-339; Puar, JK 2007, *Terrorist assemblages: Homonationalism in queer times*. Duke University Press.

<sup>140</sup> Demopoulos, A 2024, *Trans Americans brace for Trump's 'sinister' return: 'It's almost intolerable'*. Guardian News and Media Limited. Retrieved 19 November from <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/ng-interactive/2024/nov/15/trans-rights-trump>

information.<sup>141</sup> Focusing on how people are commonly manipulated and misled online, pre-bunking does not involve directly challenging falsehoods or telling people what they need to believe. As such, it can resonate with a wide audience because it's generally educational, nonjudgmental, and non-accusatory in tone.

At the same time, local media collaboration, as seen during a turning of the sod ceremony for a local mosque in the regional Victorian town of Bendigo in 2019, has demonstrated how proactive, positive messaging can counter far-right narratives (Peucker et al., 2020).<sup>142</sup> Given the confluence of local and global factors driving far-right sexual emergency crisis framing – the impacts of social media, mental health, the spread of misinformation and conspiracy theories, ubiquitous encryption, that while providing privacy for users presents challenges for intelligence gathering, growing grievance and the radicalisation of minors – will require whole of government, whole of community, whole of society responses. Prebunking through LGBTIQ+ positive and accurate news media and influencer content, in addition to the other recommendations in this report, is one way to get government, community and society collectively focused on addressing anti-LGBTIQ+ hate.

## Recommendations

8. That the Victorian Government, state and territory governments, and the federal government emphasise pre-bunking as a strategy to address anti-LGBTIQ+ mis- and disinformation.
9. That the Victorian Government, state and territory governments, and the federal government, seek continuous improvement in transparency of access to digital platform and dating app user data, so that those platforms are better responding to public expectations of security settings and complaints processes.
10. That the Victorian Government monitor digital platforms for the diffusion effects on prohibited hate groups, and as a consequence of the enactment of the *Combating Antisemitism, Hate and Extremism (Criminal and Migration Laws) Act 2026* (Cth).

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<sup>141</sup> Harjani, T, Roozenbeek, J, Biddlestone, M, van der Linden, S, Stuart, A, Iwahara, M, Piri, B, Xu, R, Goldberg, B, & Graham, M 2022, *A Practical Guide to Prebunking Misinformation*. University of Cambridge.

<sup>142</sup> Peucker, M, Spaaij, R, Smith, D, & Patton, S 2020, *Dissenting citizenship? Understanding vulnerabilities to right-wing extremism on the local level: a multilevel analysis of far-right manifestations, risk and protective factors in three local municipalities in Victoria*. Victoria University.

## CURRENT ANTI-LGBTIQA+ HATE CRIME PREVENTION INITIATIVES

**ToR3: Current anti-LGBTIQA+ hate crime prevention initiatives, and how these could be strengthened;**

Anti-LGBTIQA+ prevention initiatives include law reform, specialised police units, and community led safety campaigns. Recent law reform has included:

- ➔ NSW Anti-LGBTIQA+ Hate Crime Laws: In March 2026, the NSW government introduced legislation to increase maximum jail sentences for publicly threatening or inciting violence against individuals based on sexuality or gender identity. The legislation creates a new offence for luring victims via dating apps under false pretences, as well as an aggravated version of that offence.<sup>143</sup>
- ➔ NSW expansion of 'Post and Boast' Laws: In March 2026, following a series of attacks against members of the LGBTIQA+ community, the NSW government announced an expansion of the performance crime offence provision to include serious assault and robbery committed against members of the LGBTIQA+ community.<sup>144</sup>
- ➔ Victoria Anti-Vilification Protections: In September 2025, Victoria enacted two new criminal vilification offences, expanding hate speech laws to protect individuals from vilification based on gender identity, sex, sex characteristics, or sexual orientation, or personal association with a person with a protected attribute.<sup>145</sup> In April 2026, Victoria enacted strengthened civil vilification protections, including a modified incitement-based protection and a new harm-based protection.<sup>146</sup>

### Policing

Given that recent national research on LGBTIQA+ trust and confidence in police research led by Dr Ellis and Professor Asquith shows that LGBTIQA+ communities have lower trust and confidence in police than the general population, building and maintaining the relationships between police and LGBTIQA+ communities is critical. Key findings from that project show ambivalence in reporting to the police of offences, whether they are bias-motivated or not. As such, developing relationships between LGBTIQA+ communities and police should be a key plank of all Australian policing organisations, if it isn't already. However, as many LGBTIQA+ distrust the police, investment in alternative justice mechanisms is essential if we are to capture the extent of anti-LGBTIQA+ hate

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<sup>143</sup> New South Wales Government 2026 (March 17), *NSW Government to strengthen laws to protect LGBTIQA+ community* [Press release]. NSW Government. Retrieved 29 April 2026 from <https://www.nsw.gov.au/ministerial-releases/nsw-government-to-strengthen-laws-to-protect-lgbtqiqa-community>

<sup>144</sup> Ibid.

<sup>145</sup> Kilkeny, S 2025 (April 2), *Protecting more Victorians from hate* [Press release]. Premier of Victoria. Retrieved 29 April 2026 from <https://www.premier.vic.gov.au/protecting-more-victorians-hate>

<sup>146</sup> <https://www.vic.gov.au/new-protections-against-vilification>

crimes and better respond to the needs of victim-survivors. To date, the policing response to hate crime has been haphazard, under-funded, and partial in its coverage.

- ➔ NSW Police Force Hate Crime Unit: This unit, established in 2025<sup>147</sup>, investigates targeted attacks against LGBTIQ+ people and works with organisations like ACON to manage safety risks.
- ➔ LGBTIQ Liaison Officers (GLLOs): Used in various states, these officers are thought to improve police response to reports from LGBTIQ+ community members.
- ➔ Hate Crime Training: Some Australian policing organisations provide generalist and specialist hate crime training for their officers, including NSW Police Force staff access to a specialised hate crime investigations course. Importantly, in other jurisdictions, too often hate crime victimisation is covered in police recruit training by way of dedicated sessions on specific communities. We suggest that this approach is misplaced and siloes the issues. Comprehensive hate crime training—on all forms of hate crime—is a better approach as it enables officers to identify intersectional experiences of hate.

### Community-led Initiatives

Some LGBTIQ+ organisations and advocates provide ad hoc, unfunded support to victim-survivors in responding to hate crime victimisation. However, there is currently no dedicated community reporting system or victim-survivor advocacy and support organisation.

- ➔ ACON Safety Resources: ACON (formerly the AIDS Council of NSW) provides specific resources, support services, and safety tips for the community regarding harassment and violence.<sup>148</sup>
- ➔ Rainbow Health Australia Pride in Prevention: A Victoria-funded project aimed at preventing family violence against LGBTIQ+ communities by addressing the root causes, including homophobia and transphobia.<sup>149</sup>
- ➔ Anti-Trans Abuse Monitoring: Organisations like the Trans Justice Project monitor and report on the impact of anti-trans violence and vilification.<sup>150</sup>
- ➔ Inquiries and Advocacy: Legislative inquiries, such as the 2026 Victorian Parliament Inquiry into anti-LGBTIQ+ hate crimes, are held to evaluate the scope of violence and develop tailored prevention strategies.

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<sup>147</sup> The NSW Police Force has had a dedicated bias or hate crime unit since the late 2010s, and this is now reframed as the NSW Police Force Engagement and Hate Crime Unit

<sup>148</sup> ACON 2026, *Safety & Inclusion*. ACON. Retrieved 29 April 2026 from <https://www.acon.org.au/what-we-are-here-for/safety-inclusion/>

<sup>149</sup> Rainbow Health Australia (n.d.), *LGBTIQ family violence prevention project*. Rainbow Health Australia. Retrieved 29 April 2026 from <https://rainbowhealthaustralia.org.au/pride-in-prevention>

<sup>150</sup> Trans Justice Project (n.d.), *Resources*. Trans Justice Project. Retrieved 29 April 2026 from <https://transjustice.org.au/resources/>

Advocacy groups like Equality Australia have stated that while legal reforms are important, a broader response is necessary to address the root causes of hate, including:

- ➔ Improving reporting pathways for survivors
- ➔ Tracking emerging hate trends
- ➔ Providing dedicated, funded, and culturally safe support services for victims<sup>151</sup>

### Recommendations

11. That the Victorian Government advocates to the Federal Government to extend federal protections under the *Combatting Antisemitism, Hate and Extremism Act 2026 (Cth)* to innate sex characteristics, sexuality, and gender identity
12. That the Victorian Government advocates to the Federal Government that online and in-person activity of declared hate groups is monitored
13. That the Victorian Government advocates to the Federal Government to enact regulations or legislation for more robust content moderation

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<sup>151</sup> See Equality Australia submission to the Inquiry into anti-LGBTIQ+ hate crimes in Victoria

## EXISTING PUBLIC & ONLINE SAFETY INITIATIVES

### **ToR4: existing public and online safety initiatives supporting LGBTIQ+ community members who have experienced hate crimes, including how these supports could be strengthened**

Current strategies to counter anti-LGBTIQ+ hate crimes include reporting and support services, counselling, legal advice, advocacy, and increasing online safety measures. For example, Thorne Harbour Health in Victoria, and ACON in NSW are two leading organisations that provide support for LGBTIQ+ people who have experienced hate crimes in Australia, in particular, tech-facilitated violence.<sup>152</sup> This is achieved through targeted support services, facilitating community engagement, and advocacy through supporting law reform. Equality Australia and its state-based affiliates have also engaged with advocacy for law reform. ACON and eSafety offer dedicated advice on online safety for LGBTIQ+ individuals, and ACON provides guidance on how to safely host community events in the current, hostile social context.<sup>153</sup>

For young people in particular, the eSafety Commissioner has a specialised reporting mechanism that steps through how to report a hate crime, either as cyberbullying for under 18s or as adult cyber abuse for over 18s. The eSafety Commissioner also advises of the need to report image-based abuse immediately if intimate images are shared or if the person is being threatened, regardless of platform action.<sup>154</sup> The eSafety Guide provides direct links to report abuse on specific apps and games<sup>155</sup>. The eSafety Commissioner provides practical guidance on staying safe when using online dating platforms. It advises users to select dating apps or services that align with their needs, including those offering stronger privacy and security controls. It further recommends using in-app settings to limit who can view profiles and initiate contact, being cautious about sharing personal information, and setting boundaries around respectful communication. It also outlines how users

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<sup>152</sup> Thorne Harbour Health 2026, *Thorne Harbour Health calls on community to have their voices heard following ongoing anti-LGBTIQ+ attacks*. Thorne Harbour Health. Retrieved 29 April 2026 from <https://thorneharbour.org/news-events/media-releases/thorne-harbour-health-calls-on-community-to-have-their-voices-heard-following-ongoing-anti-lgbtiqua-attacks/>, 89

<sup>153</sup> eSafety Commissioner (n.d.), *LGBTIQ+*. eSafety Commissioner. Retrieved 29 April 2026 from <https://www.esafety.gov.au/lgbtiq>, 89

<sup>154</sup> eSafety Commissioner 2024, *Dealing with online abuse*. eSafety Commissioner. Retrieved 29 April 2026 from <https://www.esafety.gov.au/lgbtiq/learning-lounge/dealing-with-online-abuse>

<sup>155</sup> eSafety Commissioner (n.d.). *The eSafety guide*. eSafety Commissioner. Retrieved 29 April 2026 from <https://www.esafety.gov.au/key-topics/esafety-guide>

can respond to unwanted behaviour through reporting harmful content, blocking or reporting other users, and seeking further support.<sup>156</sup>

Additional support is offered to LGBTIQ+ victim-survivors by QLife, which provides anonymous, free LGBTQ+ peer support (3 pm – 9 pm).<sup>157</sup> 1800RESPECT offers confidential, free support for individuals experiencing online abuse linked to domestic or family violence.<sup>158</sup> At the same time, research shows that a range of non-government approaches can complement legal response to hate crime, including collective action through civil society community organisations, in addition to the self-regulation of digital platforms, and co-regulation between industry and government.<sup>159</sup>

Findings from Dr Ellis' research on experiences of queer expression online and in public in 2023 shows that LGBTIQ+ adults seek further, discrete integration of technology into public spaces such as QR codes for safety and connection in licensed premises and in entertainment precincts. Further integration of exit screens for use on mobile devices when users are in public spaces.<sup>160</sup>

## Recommendations

14. That the Victorian Government further integrate safe use of technology such as QR codes to increase access to safe reporting mechanisms of hate, and to build social cohesion online and in-person
15. That the Victorian Government continue to fund and promote dedicated LGBTIQ+ public and online safety initiatives
16. That the Victorian Government, state and territory governments, and the federal government, continue to work with LGBTIQ+ organisations to develop outreach programs that target LGBTIQ+ individuals with diverse sexualities and gender identities who may not identify as LGBTIQ+, or access queer public health and safety information.

<sup>156</sup> eSafety Commissioner 2025, Online dating. ESafety Commissioner. Retrieved 29 April 2026 from <https://www.esafety.gov.au/key-topics/staying-safe/online-dating>

<sup>157</sup> QLife 2026, *Get help*. QLife. Retrieved 29 April 2026 from <https://qlife.org.au/>

<sup>158</sup> 1800RESPECT 2026, Help and support. 1800RESPECT. Retrieved 29 April 2026 from <https://1800respect.org.au/help-and-support>

<sup>159</sup> Tackling Hate 2026, *Beyond Laws: Regulating Online Hate Through Collective Action*. <https://tacklinghate.org/our-work/beyond-laws-regulating-online-hate-through-collective-action/>

<sup>160</sup> Ellis et al., 2026

## ROLE & RESPONSIBILITIES OF SOCIAL MEDIA & DIGITAL PLATFORM OWNERS

### ToR 5: The role and responsibilities of social media and digital platform owners in preventing and responding to anti- LGBTIQ+ hate crimes

The spectacle of violence online, and in-person at LGBTIQ+ events, generates revenue and recruits to anti-LGBTIQ+ causes, which perpetuates the normalisation of stigma against LGBTIQ+ individuals and organisations<sup>161</sup> (Stinton, 2024). Research shows that the LGBTIQ+ community experiences online hate at more than double the national average in Australia (eSafety Commissioner 2026).<sup>162</sup> As such, social media and digital platform owners have a dual responsibility to individuals and communities who are more likely than the general population to be targeted for hate.

Firstly, social media sites and digital platforms are locations where queer identity can be co-constituted between users and their interactions with digital platforms, applications (apps), and artificial intelligence (AI). For sexual minorities, these technologies can provide spaces to build ethical emotional and political expressions of belonging (Yuval-Davis, 2006).<sup>163</sup> Given the complex relationship between LGBTIQ+ expression and visibility, it is unsurprising that LGBTIQ+ users of technologies have greater cultures of online expression and connection because of their exclusion from some social forums (Waldman, 2019).<sup>164</sup> At the same time, LGBTIQ+ people can experience higher digital vulnerability<sup>165</sup> (McKay, 2026) through online victimisation, such as digitally altered imagery abuse<sup>166</sup> (Flynn et al., 2022) and online bullying and harassment (eSafety Commissioner, 2021; House of Lords and House of Commons, 2021).<sup>167</sup>

This dichotomy illuminates the contradictory connectivity of online participation for LGBTIQ+ people in Western liberal democracies where safe online LGBTIQ+ spaces are enveloped in

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<sup>161</sup> Stinton, C 2024, From Telegram to the Tate: Patriotic Alternative's Anti-Drag Activism and Online/Offline Mobilisation. In *Victimisation in the Digital Age* (pp. 191-204). Routledge.

<sup>162</sup> eSafety Commissioner 2026, 2026 from <https://www.esafety.gov.au/key-topics/staying-safe/online-dating>

<sup>163</sup> Yuval-Davis, N 2006, Belonging and the politics of belonging. *Patterns of Prejudice*, 40(3), 197-214. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00313220600769331>

<sup>164</sup> Waldman, AE 2019, Law, privacy, and online dating: "Revenge porn" in gay online communities. *Law & Social Inquiry*, 44(4), 987-1018.

<sup>165</sup> McKay, C 2026, *Digital Vulnerability in Criminal Justice: Vulnerable People and Communication Technologies*. In: Springer Nature.

<sup>166</sup> Flynn, A, Powell, A, Scott, J, & Cama, E 2022, Deepfakes and digitally altered imagery abuse: A cross-country exploration of an emerging form of image-based sexual abuse. *The British Journal of Criminology*, 62(6), 1341-1358.

<sup>167</sup> eSafety Commissioner 2021, *Protecting LGBTIQ+ voices online: resource development research*; House of Lords and House of Commons 2021, *Draft Online Safety Bill: Report of Session 2021-22*.

ambivalent human and algorithmic decision-making processes that can repackage and amplify LGBTIQ+ stereotypes to old and new audiences.<sup>168</sup> The appropriation of user data by digital platforms and dating apps for hidden commercial practices of extraction, prediction, and targeting<sup>169</sup> can perpetuate hierarchies of human value through stereotypical datification of LGBTIQ+ expression.<sup>170</sup> As such, social media and digital platforms can perpetuate pre-digital biases, which queer communities expend considerable individual and collective resources redressing through the identity labour required to construct and align their personal sense of self with social and organisational expectations.

To address these issues, social media and digital platforms need to be more transparent about how decisions are made that effect the life outcomes of LGBTIQ+ people: how their data is used, how their content is curated, and who is profiting from online hate against LGBTIQ+ people through advertising revenue generated by adjacency to anti-LGBTIQ+ content. This occurred after the Colorado Springs shooting in the US, when anti-LGBTIQ+ 'grooming' rhetoric went viral on X, with both X and Meta profiting from online advertisements placed next to that rhetoric.<sup>171</sup> This includes ensuring that access to safe online LGBTIQ+ spaces remains a key priority.

At the same time, policies that address online abuse and hate against difference need to be rigorous enough, and their enforcement made clear, to the extent that there is increased confidence that reporting such conduct would make a difference. In general, 59% of Australian adults want the highest safety and privacy settings to be in place by default and 58% want user content to be scanned to detect and remove illegal or seriously harmful content.<sup>172</sup> At the geopolitical level, pushback by bigtech against anti-LGBTIQ+ politicians who are winding back protections for LGBTIQ+ individuals and groups would also reduce permissiveness that is emboldening public displays of prejudice, including against LGBTIQ+ individuals and communities.

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<sup>168</sup> Ellis, J (*forthcoming*). A queer critique of surveillance capitalism. *Oxford Intersections: Gender Justice* (Online First).

<sup>169</sup> Zuboff, S. (2019). *The age of surveillance capitalism: The fight for a human future at the new frontier of power*. Profile books.

<sup>170</sup> Ellis, J (*forthcoming*). A queer critique of surveillance capitalism. *Oxford Intersections: Gender Justice* (Online First).

<sup>171</sup> Center for Countering Digital Hate, 2022b.

<sup>172</sup> <https://www.esafety.gov.au/research/australians-negative-online-experiences-2022/infographic-adults-online-experiences#:~:text=59%25%20want%20the%20highest%20safety,4>

## Dating app code of conduct

Since its commencement in October 2024, some online dating services have signed up to the Voluntary Online Dating Code, an industry-led, non-binding framework aimed at improving user safety.<sup>173</sup> The Code operates independently of the eSafety Commissioner, which has no role in its enforcement. In signing up to the Code, participating services agree to detect and address online enabled harm, moderate and remove content that violates safety standards, respond to user complaints, and take action against non-compliant end-users. Each service must also publish periodic transparency reports outlining its safety measures and moderation practices. At present, current signatories to the Code include Match Group (Tinder, Hinge, OKCupid, Plenty of Fish, Match.com), Bumble (including Badoo), ParshipMeet Us Holdings Inc (eHarmony, MeetMe, Tagged, Skout, Growlr), and Grindr.<sup>174</sup>

Across transparency reports published in 2025 by Grindr, Bumble, and the Match Group, reported issues including spam and inauthentic accounts, sexual content and solicitation, harassment and abuse, scams and illegal activity, and violence and hate.<sup>175</sup> The most common complaints across all three accounts related to spam, scams, and inauthentic accounts. Violence and hate, including identity-based hate, was among the least reported categories.<sup>176</sup>

## Recommendations

17. That the Victorian Government, state and territory governments, and the federal government, continue to pressure Big Tech companies to prioritise safety over engagement metrics by: implementing proactive content moderation (while balancing this moderation with the implied freedom of political communication in the Australian constitution), increasing transparency on content moderation decisions and algorithmic decision-making

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<sup>173</sup> Australian Online Dating Code of Conduct. (n.d.). About the Code. Australia Online Dating Code of Conduct. Retrieved 29 April 2026 from

<sup>174</sup> Australian Online Dating Code of Conduct. (n.d.). Current code signatories. Australia Online Dating Code of Conduct. Retrieved 29 April 2026 from

<sup>175</sup> Match Group. (2025). *Australia Safe Dating Report*. Retrieved 29 April 2026 from <https://www.australianonlinedatingcode.com.au/resources/>; Grindr. (2025). *Australian code for online dating services: 2025 transparency report*. Grindr. Retrieved 29 April 2025 from <https://www.australianonlinedatingcode.com.au/resources/>; Bumble. (2025). *Transparency report: Australia's voluntary online dating code*. Bumble. Retrieved 29 April 2026 from <https://support.bumble.com/hc/en-us/articles/29950522485149-Australia-Voluntary-Online-Safety-Code-for-Dating-Services-Transparency-Report-August-2025>

<sup>176</sup> Match Group 2025, *Australia Safe Dating Report*. Retrieved 29 April 2026 from <https://www.australianonlinedatingcode.com.au/resources/>; Grindr 2025, *Australian code for online dating services: 2025 transparency report*. Grindr. Retrieved 29 April 2025 from <https://www.australianonlinedatingcode.com.au/resources/>; Bumble 2025, *Transparency report: Australia's voluntary online dating code*. Bumble. Retrieved 29 April 2026 from <https://support.bumble.com/hc/en-us/articles/29950522485149-Australia-Voluntary-Online-Safety-Code-for-Dating-Services-Transparency-Report-August-2025>

(including sorting, recommendation, search, and filtering algorithms); and where relevant, strengthening hate speech policies, and improving enforcement of such policies.

18. That dating app companies that have signed up to the Australia Online Dating App Code of Conduct continue to report on the measures they are taking to minimise harm to users of their apps, and to encourage the reporting to dating apps of hate experienced by LGBTIQ+ users, to build a clearer evidence-base of anti-LGBTIQ+ hate through dating apps.
19. That digital platforms and dating app companies continue to work with LGBTIQ+ community organisations and police to develop further communication strategies to address online anti-LGBTIQ+ hate and its manifestation into in-person hate, ranging from slurs to assault.

## INTERJURISDICTIONAL STRATEGIES & METHODS

### ToR 8: Interjurisdictional strategies and methods to combat anti-LGBTIQ+ hate crimes across borders

Without a core and common definition of hate crime, and complementary legal remedies, it will be difficult to develop an interjurisdictional approach to hate crime in Australia. Consistent definitions, reporting and recording mechanisms and tools, legal remedies, police training and capability, sentencing provisions, and rehabilitation programs are necessary for consistent responses to hate crimes, including those hate crimes that occur online and across jurisdictional borders.

An important aspect of a comprehensive national approach to hate crime is the creation of hate crime risk assessment tools for police based on data-driven hate crime indicators (see, for example, Vergani et al<sup>177</sup>). However, whilst comprehensive, the indicators developed by Vergani et al to assess the context of violence and motivation are not ideally suited to frontline policing, which is the most common encounter with police in responding to hate crime. Increasing the capability of police to recognise, report, and respond to targeted violence against LGBTIQ+ communities requires tools that are ready made for frontline responsive policing.<sup>178</sup>

It is important to develop community capacity to prevent and respond to hate crimes given the low levels of trust in police and the wider criminal justice system, and the desire of some victim-survivors to seek a non-criminal justice response to their victimisation. In addition to the resourcing of a national third-party reporting system, community-led responses to hate crime, if funded appropriately, may provide a one-stop-shop for not only reporting hate crime, but also victim-survivor psychological and physical health, and legal support. Unlike other victim-survivors of interpersonal violence, such as family and intimate-partner violence, currently there is no victim advocacy or support service for any victim-survivors of hate crime, let alone LGBTIQ+ victim-survivors.

### Recommendations

20. That the Victorian Government, state and territory governments, and the federal government, work with international policing agencies and digital platforms and dating app

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<sup>177</sup> Vergani, M, Stefanopoulos, A, Lee, A, Tran, H, Richards, I, Goodhardt, S, & Barton G. 2022, *Defining and identifying hate motives: bias indicators for the Australian context*. Melbourne: Centre for Resilient and Inclusive Societies.

<sup>178</sup> See, for example, submission to this inquiry by Geoff Steer

companies to monitor and report on 'grey zone' operations that target LGBTIQ+ expression.

21. That the Victorian Government, state and territory governments, and the federal government, advocate for LGBTIQ+ rights with states that criminalise and pathologise diverse sexual orientation and gender identity, and who maybe generating anti-LGBTIQ+ mis- and disinformation that can be legitimised through political support for anti-LGBTIQ+ rhetoric.

## RELEVANT WORK

**ToR 9: The relevant work of the Commissioner for LGBTIQ+ Communities, relevant government advisory groups, including but not limited to relevant community, health and law enforcement organisations to combat anti-LGBTIQ+ hate crimes**

In our response to the Inquiry's ToRs, we have not scoped the full ecology of hate crime, and the necessary actions required from prevention to rehabilitation. However, this work was already fully scoped by the Australian Hate Crime Network in its submission to the NSW Parliamentary Inquiry into Gay and Transgender Historical Homicides.<sup>179</sup> We end our submission by noting that a robust hate crime strategy addressing the shared and unique characteristics of hate crime directed at LGBTIQ+ people must consider, at least:

- ➔ Prevention campaigns and programs addressing the drivers of hate crime and prejudice
- ➔ Increased community awareness of the harms of hate and the prevalence of hate crimes
- ➔ Increased LGBTIQ+ communities' awareness of what constitutes a hate crime, a hate incident, and vilification
- ➔ Third party reporting systems
- ➔ Enhanced policing reporting strategies and community engagement to build trust
- ➔ Police training in recognising, recording and investigating hate crime
- ➔ Hate crime risk assessment tool for first responders
- ➔ Legislation that includes LGBTIQ+ as protected attributes
- ➔ Non-criminal justice responses to hate crime victimisation, including robust restorative justice responses
- ➔ Media literacy on the technological and social drivers of 'sexual emergency' crisis framing
- ➔ Bespoke hate crime offender rehabilitation programs
- ➔ Monitoring digital platforms for the diffusion effects on prohibited hate groups

### Recommendations

22. That the Victorian Government works with other state and Federal Governments to convene a national forum of targeted communities to explore the full ecology of hate crime and the strategies necessary to prevent and respond to hate crime.

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<sup>179</sup> Australian Hate Crime Network 2020, Submission to the NSW Legislative Council Standing Committee on Social Issues: Inquiry into Gay and Transgender Hate Crimes between 1970 and 2010. Sydney: AHCN.

## APPENDIX A

**Table A1.** Fear of Heterosexism Scale.

Item #	Item Wording	Temporal Orientation
FOH1	I feel vulnerable to prejudice/discrimination from people I know	Present
FOH2	I feel safe in my neighborhood	Present
FOH3	I fear that I will lose my job because of prejudice/discrimination against LGBTIQ people	Future
FOH4	LGBTIQ people are safer if they hide their sexual or gender identity or behavior	Present
FOH5	I fear that I will be physically unsafe because of my sexual or gender identity	Future
FOH6	I feel vulnerable to prejudice and discrimination from strangers	Present
FOH7	I fear that I will lose friends because of my sexual or gender identity	Future
FOH8	Prejudice and/or discrimination are not a worry for me	Present
FOH9	I avoid doing some things because of possible prejudice and/or discrimination	Present
FOH10	I fear I will not be accepted by my communities because of my sexual or gender identity	Future
FOH11	I feel safe to be open about my sexuality	Present
FOH12	I feel vulnerable to violence and/or harassment from strangers	Present
FOH13	I would be confident about reporting violence or harassment to the Police	Future
FOH14	I fear that I will be ridiculed or vilified because of my sexual or gender identity	Future
FOH15	I would be confident about reporting prejudice and/or discrimination to the ADC	Future
FOH16 <sup>a</sup>	As a LGBTIQ person, I am alert to prejudice and discrimination	Present

Note. FOH = Fear of Heterosexism; ADC = Anti-Discrimination Commission.

<sup>a</sup>This item was deleted after initial reliability analysis.