

Victorian Commissioner for LGBTIQ+ Communities' Submission to Parliamentary Inquiry on Anti-LGBTIQ+ Hate Crimes

May 2026

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Table of Contents

1.	Opening Statement	1
2.	Overview of document.....	4
3.	Overview of the Commissioner's role and functions.....	4
4.	Summary reflections.....	5
4.1	Tech-facilitated abuse (the dating app attacks)	5
4.2	Relevant insights from gender-based violence and security experts	6
4.3	Broader attacks and context.....	8
5.	Background information	10
6.	Actions to date.....	15
6.1	Actions by the Victorian Government.....	15
6.2	Actions undertaken by LGBTIQ+ services.....	15
6.3	Actions by the Commissioner (in collaboration where noted).....	16
6.4	Actions undertaken by previous Commissioner, Dr Todd Fernando	17
6.5	Future anticipated actions	17
7.1	Recommended further reading	17
7.2	Initiatives that are working well / recommended resources	18
	Recommendations	19
	Appendix 1 – Community Safety Messaging	21
	Appendix 2 – Media Engagement Regarding LGBTIQ+ Hate and Hate Crimes	22
	Appendix 3 – Rainbow Mob / Aboriginal LGBTIQ+SB people	23

1. Opening Statement

- 1.1 As Commissioner for LGBTIQ+ Communities, the health and wellbeing of LGBTIQ+ Victorians is my key priority. Every person – regardless of sexuality, gender identity, sex characteristics, family structure and all identity characteristics – deserves to live safely, openly, equally and with dignity, in their public and domestic lives. Safety is a fundamental human right recognised internationally through the United Nations' *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, reflected in Victoria's *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006* and reinforced through the Victorian *Victims' Charter Act 2006*.



- 1.2 Victorian LGBTIQ+ hate crimes must be understood and addressed within the lens of Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) and deradicalisation.¹ There have been significant numbers of coordinated hate crimes against LGBTIQ+ people in Victoria and across Australia and terrorist attacks on LGBTIQ+ people overseas.²
- 1.3 For LGBTIQ+ Victorians, safety has historically been conditional. Before the decriminalisation of homosexuality in 1981, and for some time afterwards, our existence was criminalised. In this context, violence against us was not simply ignored by the law, it was enabled by it. In 2016, the State formally apologised to those convicted by the criminalisation of homosexuality, acknowledging the profound harm caused; an important act of truth-telling and recognition. But this apology does not erase history, nor end the impacts of stigma, shame, violence and exclusion that these laws legitimised for generations. There are many other instances of historical mistreatment and harms against LGBTIQ+ Victorians by institutions, within systems and by broader society. One example is the historical treatment of lesbian mothers in family law and child custody matters, where homosexuality was constructed as evidence of immorality, deviance or parental unfitness.³ The legacy of criminalisation and other harms continues in LGBTIQ+ people's experiences of hate, fear, underreporting of crimes and other harms and in a mistrust of institutions.
- 1.4 Hate crimes do not emerge in isolation. They occur within a broader social context shaped by prejudice, dehumanisation, fear and the belief that some people are less deserving of safety, inclusion and belonging. We see a rise in anti-LGBTIQ+ sentiment globally. In this context:
- a. The role of Government, institutions and the broader community must be not only to respond to hate crimes when they occur, but to actively create the conditions in which all Victorians may live safe and equal lives; and
 - b. The role of leadership matters deeply. Political and community leaders, institutions, media voices and other public figures all help shape social conditions in which communities feel safe, valued and connected, or targeted, isolated and at risk. Leadership can build social cohesion, or it can legitimise hostility, division and dehumanisation.
- 1.5 It is also clear that hate against groups and classes of individuals is being stoked in an interconnected and organised way via online platforms and digital technologies.⁴ Consequently, Victorian and Australian Government regulation *must* keep pace with developments in Big Tech and rapid advancements in technology, including Artificial Intelligence (AI). Most notably:
- a. AI is transforming the way that social media users think via algorithms which impact which content is platformed or censored, moderating appeals against online content, and 'help

¹ New South Wales (NSW) Legislative Assembly Committee on Law and Safety Inquiry, *Measures to Combat Right-Wing Extremism in NSW: Final Report*, April 2026, Finding 1 notes that right-wing extremism targets LGBTIQ+ people. Finding 2: 'Prejudice fuels extremism. Right-wing extremists promote forms of hate such as antisemitism, racism, islamophobia, homophobia, transphobia and misogyny and encourage these... [to become] part of mainstream political discourse.' p.v.

² See Victorian data in section four of this submission. In 2016, a mass shooting at Pulse Nightclub in Orlando, Florida, United States (US) – a prominent LGBTQ+ venue – saw 49 deaths and another 53 people wounded and was classed as a domestic terrorist attack. In 2022, the Club Q shooting in Colorado Springs, US, saw five people killed and another 18-25 wounded.

³ See J. Millbank, 'The Limits of Functional Family: Lesbian Mother Litigation in the Era of the Eternal Biological Family', 22(2) *International Journal of Law, Policy and the Family*, 2008, p.149; D. Dempsey, *Lesbian Parenthood: Experiences of Resistance and Accommodation in Australian Families*, Ashgate, 2013.

⁴ 'Executive Summary', R. Cover et al., [Digital Harms: Consistency in definition, understanding and action](#), RMIT University and the University of Melbourne Concept Paper, Digital Ethnography Research Centre, March 2026, pp.iii-iv. See also *Measures to Combat Right-Wing Extremism in NSW*, Finding 13 – 'A major way people become radicalised is online.' p.vii.

promote and normalise extremism.⁵

- b. Recent research from RMIT University and the University of Melbourne highlights that ‘digital harm is widely felt and recognised, yet poorly named and inadequately conceptualised. Without a shared language, there is no stable foundation for prevention, regulation, education or accountability.’⁶

1.6 The Commissioner views this inquiry as groundbreaking: the first of its kind in Victoria. It offers an opportunity for accountability, reform, truth-telling, recognition and prevention. The inquiry may hear from community members who have experienced abuse, harassment and vilification because they are LGBTIQ+. When hateful incidents occur at scale and are reinforced by prevailing social, cultural and political discourses, they cannot be dismissed as isolated acts. They must be acknowledged and addressed. Hate directed at one community, if left unchecked, erodes safety, social cohesion and trust in public institutions.

1.7 LGBTIQ+ communities are not the only ones to experience hate or targeted violence. This inquiry will hear from people whose experiences sit at the intersection of multiple identities and forms of marginalisation and discrimination, and it is my hope, be strengthened by their insights. Other voices may not be heard; some groups – for example, LGBTIQ+ refugees or sex workers – may not trust government and this process enough to engage.⁷ For many LGBTIQ+ people, experiences of anti-LGBTIQ+ hate cannot be separated from their race, religion, disability, culture or migration status. Intersecting identities compound vulnerability, deepen exclusion and shape the forms violence takes.

1.8 Research has demonstrated that hate targeting LGBTIQ+ people and/or women, First Peoples and multicultural communities is often interconnected.⁸ Contemporary extremist movements, manosphere and/or far-right influencers frequently target multiple minority communities simultaneously, reflecting the convergence of racism, faith-based ideologies, antisemitism, misogyny, homophobia and transphobia, etc, and utilising similar narratives of exclusion, conspiracy and dehumanisation. In Victoria, this overlapping and cross-community targeting has been visible in several public incidents:

- In March 2023, neo-Nazis joined and performed Nazi salutes outside the anti-trans rally led by British activist Kellie-Jay Keen-Minshull (‘Posie Parker’) on the steps of Parliament.
- Anti-LGBTIQ+ graffiti attacks at The Laird Hotel and antisemitic graffiti directed at the Melbourne Holocaust Museum reportedly occurred on the same night in July 2025, involving the same spray-paint stencil.

Repeated incidents of cross-community targeting reinforce the importance of understanding and

⁵ Finding 13, NSW Parliamentary Inquiry, *Measures to Combat Right-Wing Extremism in NSW: Final Report*, April 2026, p.vii. <https://time.com/7339628/geoffrey-hinton-ai/>. Meta has disbanded its dedicated civil rights team, its internal Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion programs and its duty of care via online moderation is now performed by AI. As noted by an international human rights organisation to the Commissioner. See here <https://www.techinasia.com/news/metas-head-civil-rights-leave-company>. Repco Uncensored, which tracks online censorship, have noted a rise in censorship, which ‘reinforce the power imbalance that allows Big Tech to decide whose voices are amplified and whose are silenced’. <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2025/dec/11/meta-shuts-down-global-accounts-linked-to-abortion-advice-and-queer-content>.

⁶ R. Cover et al., *Digital Harms*, p.iv.

⁷ Foundation House told the Commissioner that while they intended to make a submission and ran community workshops to this effect, community members did not trust the process enough to engage. Dedicated outreach is needed with more marginalised LGBTIQ+ community members, who may have additional layers of trauma and negative experiences with government systems, to build confidence in processes. The Commissioner will meet with this community outside of the inquiry process.

⁸ Roose, J., & Khalil, L., ‘Anti-Government Extremism in Australia: Understanding the Australian Anti-Lockdown Freedom Movement as a Complex Anti-Government Social Movement’, Deakin University / ICCT, 2023.

responding to hate crimes through a whole-of-community lens, while still recognising the distinct impacts experienced by different communities.

- 1.9 Hate/extremist narratives also emerge within minority communities themselves, amongst individuals who experience other forms of discrimination. While not a justification, minority communities can experience an amplification of lateral violence, resulting from negative experiences of being 'othered' by broader societal stigma, discrimination, vilification and prejudice over lifetimes. Consequently, there is a need to focus on behaviours, radicalisation pathways and harmful beliefs and ideologies, and not treat any community as homogenous.
- 1.10 LGBTIQ+ people simply want to live, love and go about their everyday lives free from hate and violence, like all Victorians.

2. Overview of document

- 2.1 This submission reflects the Commissioner's independent views. Recommendations are not endorsed government policy, and references to government activity are contextual only.
- 2.2 The scope of this submission is limited to relevant aspects of the Inquiry's Terms of Reference (ToR) for the Commissioner, with the expectation that other items will be covered by relevant parties. Where the content falls outside the ToR this will be due to providing context or where there is ambiguity around the established limit of the inquiry (i.e. the timeframe and the definition of hate crime).
- 2.3 Some observations and reflections that are included in this document have been gathered through community consultations, internal committees, working groups and/or direct approaches made to the Commissioner by LGBTIQ+ Victorians and/or their families, as noted throughout the document.

3. Overview of the Commissioner's role and functions

- 3.1 The role of the Commissioner for LGBTIQ+ Communities is not a statutory role with legislated functions. The role is primarily about advocacy and representation, and bringing diverse LGBTIQ+ communities' lived experience into government. The Commissioner's duties include, but are not limited to:
 - Advising the Victorian Government on emerging LGBTIQ+ priorities and issues, relevant emerging research, and the impact of government policies, initiatives and programs on our diverse communities
 - Providing an independent public voice to build understanding and awareness amongst the broader Victorian community on issues affecting LGBTIQ+ Victorians
 - Actively engaging and consulting with LGBTIQ+ Victorians and their families on a range of issues and needs; and
 - Playing a key role in the implementation of the Victorian Government's landmark 10-year LGBTIQ+ Strategy: [Pride in our future: Victoria's LGBTIQ+ strategy 2022-32](#).

- 3.2 *Pride in our future* guides the Victorian Government’s work towards equality. Through the strategy, the Commissioner supports departments, agencies and all levels of government to create a more inclusive and cohesive state that celebrates and embraces diversity, and where LGBTIQ+ Victorians can enjoy the same opportunities as other Victorians. The vision of the strategy is that all Victorians feel safe, are healthy, have equal human rights and can live wholly and freely. The strategy outlines four areas of reform:
- Protecting equal rights and freedoms
 - Making services more equitable, inclusive, and accessible
 - Building evidence to drive decision making; and
 - Ensuring LGBTIQ+ communities are safe and strong.
- 3.3 The Commissioner supports cross-portfolio and sector work and initiatives, information sharing and LGBTIQ+ ‘mainstreaming’ across all levels of government, sectors and diverse communities. The Commissioner’s work is informed by expert advice, evidence-based research, work underway across government and community intelligence. This work includes, but is not limited to, working with researchers in gender-based violence and extremism, specialist family violence and sexual assault, men’s health, mental health, health, Local Councils, LGBTIQ+ services and prevention bodies, connecting learnings across numerous portfolios.
- 3.4 The Commissioner has two staff and sits in and is supported by the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing.
- 3.5 Prior to his role as Commissioner, Commissioner Ball worked for more than two decades in the social services not-for-profit sector, including with people living with a disability and people experiencing homelessness, family violence and poor mental health. He has held senior service delivery roles in the prevention of suicide and family violence, including being a community representative on the 1800 Respect Advisory Committee and a board member of Safe and Equal. He has also worked for the Federal Government within the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission and for the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

4. Summary reflections

4.1 Tech-facilitated abuse (the dating app attacks)

- 4.1.1 Since January 2024, gay and bi+ men throughout Australia have been targeted through dating apps (or in some cases social media) by groups of adolescent boys and young men. The perpetrators lure men to public locations where they ambush, assault, rob and film their victims in coordinated LGBTIQ+ hate crimes. These attacks have been planned on encrypted platforms, executed using fake dating profiles, filmed and shared online to humiliate, intimidate and extort victims and for social media notoriety.⁹
- 4.1.2 Over 95 incidents of dating app attacks against gay and bi+ men have been reported to Victoria Police since 2024. There have been many more attacks reported across Australia more broadly.

⁹ Understood from media reports, and direct reports from Victorian victim survivors and LGBTIQ+ services.

Victoria Police have made over 42 arrests. Some of those charged for these crimes have been as young as 13 years of age.¹⁰

- 4.1.3 These crimes are significantly underreported. In June 2025, the Commissioner, Thorne Harbour Health and Victoria Police held a Community Safety Forum for gay and bi+ men where there were 12 disclosures from victim survivors who had not reported attacks to the police.¹¹ Some of these attacks occurred several years in the past but due to personal trauma, shame and a lack of trust in policing processes for LGBTIQ+ communities, reports were not made.
- 4.1.4 Reporting from services supporting victims, victims themselves or information shared directly with the Commissioner's office reveals that people from multicultural and multifaith backgrounds and those living in outer-suburban and regional areas may be more vulnerable to these attacks and less likely to report. Barriers to reporting compound for communities if victims are not 'out' and if they have less access to inclusive supports to facilitate people coming forward.
- 4.1.5 Media reporting on some cases have shown a pattern of perpetration, where young men have been radicalised online into violent anti-LGBTIQ+ prejudice that frames violence against gay men as masculine, vigilante justice and a bonding rite of passage. The direct link between online hate content and offline harm is evident in the June 2025 sentencing of a Victorian man. His attacks on gay men, lured via online dating apps, were found by the Court to have been directly inspired by vigilante content on TikTok and YouTube.¹²
- 4.1.6 In addition, work led by the Zoe Belle Gender Collective (ZBGC) through their Transfemme and 'Tech Respect' initiatives has highlighted the growing issue of technology-facilitated dating app abuse directed at trans women and transfeminine people. This abuse includes online harassment, fetishisation, objectification, sexual exploitation and violence, coercive control, physical violence and other harms linked to online dating environments and AI.¹³

4.2 Relevant insights from gender-based violence and security experts

- 4.2.1 While the full extent of the motivations for these crimes is still coming to light through court proceedings, gender-based violence and security experts have insights relevant to this inquiry.
- 4.2.2 LGBTIQ+ communities are impacted by many of the same gendered drivers of violence as cisgender heterosexual women, such as rigid gender roles and stereotyped constructions of masculinity and femininity.¹⁴ The Commissioner supports Our Watch's National Prevention Framework for gender-based violence – *Change the Story* – and the seminal work of Professor Raewyn Connell, which maintains that homophobia, biphobia and transphobia are inextricably linked to sexism and misogyny.¹⁵ It is the Commissioner's view that tech-facilitated violence

¹⁰ <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2025-07-06/gay-dating-app-users-lured-into-violent-homophobic-attacks/105464048>. See also <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2024/oct/17/victoria-gay-men-grindr-dating-app-attacks-police-arrests-ntwnfb>

¹¹ Direct reports from victim survivors at the event.

¹² J. Taylor, 'Victorian man sentenced for attacks on men he met on Grindr says TikTok vigilante videos inspired him.' *The Guardian*, 3 June 2025.

¹³ Reports by Zoe Belle Gender Collective (ZBGC) to the Commissioner based on new research, due for release by June 2027. See <https://www.latrobe.edu.au/news/announcements/2025/new-grant-tech-respect-primary-prevention-of-tech-based-abuse-against-transgender-women>. See ZBGC's Transfemme resources here: <https://zbgc.org.au/campaigns/transfemme/>

¹⁴ M. Carman, J. Fairchild, M. Parsons, C. Farrugia, J. Power, & A. Bourne, *Pride in Prevention: a guide to primary prevention of family violence experienced by LGBTIQ communities*, Melbourne: La Trobe University, 2020. Our Watch's National Prevention Framework for LGBTIQ+ Communities, a draft of which has been reviewed by the Commissioner and is due out in late 2026. See also Respect Victoria's 2026 IDAHOBIT social media campaign.

¹⁵ Our Watch, *Change the Story: A Shared Framework for the Primary Prevention of Violence Against Women in Australia*, 2nd ed, 2021, pp.33–36 and 52–55; R. Connell, *Masculinities*, 2nd ed, University of California Press, 2005, pp.67–86.

against gay and bi+ men shares common features with tech-facilitated violence against women, girls and gender diverse people, for example: technology being used as a tool of coercion and control; exploitation of vulnerabilities; and rigid, binary, traditional and hierarchical norms about gender and sexuality.

- 4.2.3 The Australian Security Intelligence Organisation's (ASIO's) 2025 *Director General's Annual Threat Assessment* identified youth radicalisation as a national security priority, noting that: the median age at which minors come to ASIO's attention is now 15; that approximately 85 per cent of that caseload is male; and that radicalisation can occur more quickly than previously understood. ASIO also noted that 'if technology continues its current trajectory, it will be easier to find extremist material, and AI-fuelled algorithms will make it easier for extremist material to find vulnerable adolescent minds that are searching for meaning and connection.'¹⁶
- 4.2.4 There is a rise in right-wing online influencers and anti-rights groups promoting anti-LGBTIQ+ content, and violent and aggressive masculinity and rigid, binary, traditional and hierarchal gender norms to adolescent boys and young men.¹⁷ Ideals perpetuated by right-wing influencers and anti-rights groups punish gender non-conforming behaviour and spread homophobia, misogyny and transphobia (alongside hate against women and other minorities), which is reinforced by peer networks.¹⁸ The data indicates that negative attitudes towards LGBTIQ+ people are present among a significant proportion of Australian adolescent boys, providing a base from which radicalisation may take hold. A 2025 national survey of 1,401 young people aged 14 to 18 found that:
- 48 per cent of boys believed being thought of as gay makes someone less of a man¹⁹
 - 47 per cent said teenage boys should never act like a girl²⁰
 - one in five straight teenage boys believe that it is not okay to be friends with transgender and gender diverse people.²¹

The final report notes that 'rigid, traditional notions of masculinity contribute to harmful behaviours by some men and boys with devastating impacts of others – including violence against women and children, and targeted attacks on gay men and transgender people.'²² Boys who most strongly internalise restrictive masculine norms are more likely to hold harmful attitudes and engage in aggressive behaviours.²³

- 4.2.5 There is a broader trend of polarisation and radicalisation arising from the digital environment, which is itself 'toxified by persistent hostility, manipulation, polarisation, misinformation and

¹⁶ Australian Security Intelligence Organisation, [Director-General's Annual Threat Assessment 2025](#), delivered by Mike Burgess, 19 February 2025.

¹⁷ eSafety Commissioner, *Supporting young men online: understanding young men's needs, the pull of harmful content and the way forward*, Canberra: Australian Government, 2025, pp.10-11. See also Jesuit Social Services (JSS), [Adolescent Man Box](#) Final Report, 2025. 'It is likely that even 'neutral' content, such as health or fitness advice, may carry restrictive or harmful gender messages....' The report notes that further research is needed to understand the ideological nature of content being viewed by young Australians. p.65.

¹⁸ M. Horta Ribeiro et al., 'The Evolution of the Manosphere Across the Web', Fifteenth International AAAI Conference on Web and Social Media, Vol.15, 2021, p.96. See also [Adolescent Man Box](#), pp.60-62, which considers influences on adolescents' attitudes about gender, which are learned through socialisation, starting with families and shifting more to peers and other influences including social media during adolescence.

¹⁹ JSS, [Adolescent Man Box](#), p.42.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*, p.53.

²² *Ibid.*, p.32. 'Homophobia and transphobia' were also identified as one of seven pillars of the *Adult Man Box*. *Ibid.*, p.36.

²³ *Ibid.*, p.79.

exploitative design, reducing trust, participation and the conditions for collective life.²⁴ Consequently, greater regulation is needed to address online drivers of hate, such as through:

- Teach Us Consent's *Fix Our Feeds* campaign ask to make algorithms opt in²⁵
- Legal obligations on platforms to cooperate promptly and fully with police investigations
- Duty-of-care obligations on platforms to detect, remove, and report content inciting hate-motivated violence, with referral of relevant cases to the eSafety Commissioner and federal regulators where platform failures are identified.

4.2.6 The Commissioner supports gender-based violence experts and relevant others in calling for improved regulatory environments to be accompanied by widespread, expanded community education and social programs to improve literacy around gender-based violence and online harms (including LGBTIQ+ content), including amongst parents / carers and community leaders.²⁶ This would complement the continued delivery of age-appropriate, inclusive, respectful relationships, sexuality and consent education.

4.3 Broader attacks and context

4.3.1 Drawing from mainstream media reporting, published peer review research, published reports and consultations with community members, the Commissioner asserts that there has been a rise in coordinated and targeted violence, harassment, vilification and abuse against LGBTIQ+ communities more broadly since 2022, including at LGBTIQ+ events, venues, Council meetings, on public transport, in schools, sport, online, in public spaces through derogatory graffiti. (It is important to note that there is a long history in Australia and Victoria of violent homophobic and transphobia assaults that precede the rise in reported incidents since 2022, as evidenced by the documented murders of LGBTIQ+ people – particularly gay men and trans women – across Australia over many decades). The most representative examples include:

- Numerous attacks against drag story times, libraries and youth events; and
- The rally of March 2023 where trans advocates demonstrated against the visit of UK anti-trans activist Kellie-Jay Keen-Minshull, when approximately 30 National Socialist Network members performed Nazi salutes and held a banner declaring 'kill paedo freaks' on the steps of Parliament House. This event demonstrated the increasingly visible convergence between anti-trans activism and far-right extremist mobilisation.

4.3.2 LGBTIQ+ data gaps make it difficult to ascertain the true extent of harm and need for LGBTIQ+ communities. Improved data collection is urgently needed across key Victorian Government collections, to support policy development and program design providers and responders to fully understand and respond to rising hate. Ideally, this will increasingly happen through the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission's (VEOHRC's)

²⁴ R. Cover et al., *Digital Harms*, p.v. [Director-General's Annual Threat Assessment 2025](#).

²⁵ <https://www.teachusconsent.com/fix-our-feeds>

²⁶ NSW Parliamentary Inquiry, *Measures to Combat Right-Wing Extremism in NSW: Final Report*, Recommendation 12 is 'that the NSW Government ensure that there are education programs in schools that address specific forms of discrimination and intolerance, including antisemitism, islamophobia, racism, misogyny and discrimination based on gender, disability or LGBTIQ+ status.' P.vii. 'Finding 12 is that 'Right-wing extremism is a social issue as well as a criminal and security issue... [requiring] social policies and programs... to promote social cohesion and prevent radicalisation.' p.vi. J. Gilmore, *It Takes a Village to Teach Your Children About Consent*, J. Gilmore, Australia, 2025.

Community Reporting Tool (CRT)²⁷ (and other collections across key Government portfolios such as Police, Corrections, Housing, Health, Mental Health, etc.), noting that VEOHRC's tool is for vilification only. Although this has the potential to collate limited evidence of need over time, it is not a silver bullet when seeking to address hate crime reporting. Community reporting to the Commissioner, and limited Victoria Police data, suggests that in addition to the attacks on gay and bisexual men, there has been a rise in attacks against trans and gender diverse people, especially women and girls, people in rural and regional areas, multicultural and multi-faith communities and people with a disability. Other LGBTIQ+ communities may also be impacted.

4.3.3 There is significant underreporting of crimes by LGBTIQ+ victim survivors. Some victim survivors in the community do not feel safe to report for a range of reasons, including:

- fear/distrust of police or of being judged, misidentified or 'outed'²⁸
- losing control of who knows (mistrust in privacy and confidentiality processes), and/or having their private lives scrutinised by police and/or media reporting
- a fear of retribution or concern when the perpetrator is released from incarceration, especially when the crime happened at a known and ongoing location frequented by the victim; i.e. their home, a community venue or workplace; and/or
- believing that their needs will not be served by a criminal justice system response.²⁹

4.3.4 LGBTIQ+ people, when compared to the general population, also face additional gaps and barriers to accessing support services, which is compounded for those with additional needs such as people with a disability.³⁰

4.3.5 Trans and gender diverse people experience a disproportionate level of online hate. As evidenced by the eSafety Commissioner, LGBTIQ+ Australians experience online hate at more than double the rate of the general population: 30 per cent compared with 14 per cent nationally.³¹

4.3.6 This rise in hate and reported hate crimes has the following impacts:

- Victim survivors of hate crimes carry a lot of shame, evoking lifelong experiences of stigma and discrimination. Silence in the media or from leaders about these crimes and

²⁷ VEOHRC's CRT was introduced in 2025 and was initially to be used by anyone in the community to make reports of racism, sexual harassment or discrimination of any kind. It was developed as part of the Reducing Racism project, which was originally focused on people from African and/or Muslim communities. Following anti-vilification and social cohesion reforms, the CRT has been expanded to all protected attributes under the [Justice Legislation Amendment \(Anti-vilification and Social Cohesion\) Act 2025](#). The protected attributes are race, religion, disability, gender identity, sex, sex characteristics, sexual orientation, and personal association with a person with a protected attribute. The CRT is hosted on the VEOHRC website and offers a widget option for external organisations to add the CRT to their own website, efficiently connecting communities to the tool.

²⁸ There have been high profile police investigations where privacy wasn't maintained by police (i.e. the case of Danielle Laidley), and where LGBTIQ+ people have been misidentified as the primary perpetrator (i.e. the raid of the LGBTIQ+ bookshop Hares and Hyenas where a gay man had his arm broken when he was misidentified as a suspect).

²⁹ As reported to the Commissioner and Q+Law LGBTIQ+ specialist legal service.

³⁰ AO Hill et al., [Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of LGBTQA+ People with Disability: A Secondary Analysis of Data from Two National Surveys](#), ARCSHS, 2022, accessed 29 April 2026. Prepared for the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability.

³¹ A 2023 national survey of 3,059 people found that 9 in 10 participants witnessed anti-trans hate online in the preceding 12 months, with reported forms including threats of violence, death threats, and incitement to suicide.^[ii] Between 2020-2023, 85 per cent of respondents witnessed an increase in online anti-trans hate and harassment, with a further spike recorded in the two months coinciding with the national tour of anti-trans lobbyist Kellie-Jay Keen-Minshull, during which seven in 10 participants reported an increase in online anti-trans hate. eSafety Commissioner, [Online experiences of LGBTIQ+ Australians aged 18 to 65](#), 2022. See also Trans Justice Project & Victorian Pride Lobby, [Fuelling Hate: abuse, harassment, vilification and violence against trans people in Australia](#), Report, 2024.

their experiences contributes to victim survivors' belief that they deserved their attack (and may also contribute to under-reporting). Responses must be victim-centred.

- The impact has been felt beyond individual victim survivors and their families of choice and origin. LGBTIQ+ communities generally have also been impacted as news of attacks has spread, causing others to fear for their safety. LGBTIQ+ specialist and peer-support services have reported growing demand and an increasing number of crisis presentations since the attacks began.
- Councils, libraries, schools and community organisations have reported increased staff fear and anxiety, volunteer burnout, reputational pressures, substantial increased security costs and a reduced willingness to publicly host or promote inclusive LGBTIQ+ programming. Community organisations continue to report difficulty in securing venues and local government support for LGBTIQ+ events, while the increasing burden of security and insurance costs diverts limited resources away from frontline community support and service delivery.

5. Background information

- 5.1 Some events described in this section may not be considered hate crimes, especially where they target venues or involve verbal abuse. However, the prevalence and broad spread of the incidents described demonstrate a broader ecosystem of targeted hostility, intimidation and abuse directed at LGBTIQ+ communities across Victoria. The social and political conditions that legitimise hate and hate crimes do not develop overnight; they arise from decades of tolerating, and in some cases, condoning, hate and prejudice.
- 5.2 In July 2022, the **Melbourne Shrine of Remembrance** Chief Executive Dean Lee cancelled plans to light up the structure in rainbow colours following significant, sustained abuse and threats directed at staff over several days. Lee described the backlash as 'hateful'.³² The lighting was planned as part of the opening of a new exhibition, *Defending with Pride: Stories of LGBTQ+ Service*, documenting the history of LGBTQ+ personnel in the Australian armed forces. While the lighting was cancelled, the exhibition went ahead.
- 5.3 Between 2022 and April 2024, publicly available reporting, council statements, library sector evidence and anti-extremism research indicate a sustained pattern of intimidation, harassment and disruption targeting **LGBTIQ+ community events, youth programs, rainbow family activities and inclusive public education initiatives** across Victoria. Available reporting suggests that at least 15 Victorian events were cancelled, postponed, relocated, moved online, hidden from public advertising, or otherwise substantially altered due to threats, safety concerns or organised intimidation campaigns. When broader incidents are included such as protests, bomb threats, doxxing, coordinated online harassment, intimidation of staff and councillors, venue secrecy and attempted event disruption, more than 25 incidents likely occurred during this period (see table at 5.8).
- 5.4 Most documented incidents occurred during what researchers and media reports described as a significant escalation in organised anti-drag and anti-LGBTIQ+ mobilisation in Australia. Online

³² <https://www.sbs.com.au/news/article/abuse-and-threats-put-at-risk-melbourne-shrine-of-remembrance-rainbow-plans/we63aqi7c>

harassment frequently acted as a precursor to, or amplifier of, offline intimidation and targeted disruption. Online actors, including individuals from interstate and overseas, reportedly directed followers to contact venues and councils in attempts to pressure organisers into cancelling events. Research linked this escalation to overlapping networks involving neo-Nazi and far-right organising, conspiracy and anti-vaccination movements, imported United States anti-drag rhetoric, and coordinated online harassment ecosystems.³³

5.5 **Public libraries** became a particular target because they hosted drag story times, rainbow family events, queer youth programs and inclusive literacy activities. According to Public Libraries Victoria (PLV), library workers were among those most directly affected by escalating anti-LGBTIQA+ hostility. A day-long training was held for library staff to support them in dealing with incidents as the frequency of disruptions grew.³⁴ Staff from Monash Public Libraries, Yarra Plenty Regional Library and Mornington Peninsula libraries reportedly experienced extremist targeting, including anti-trans materials hidden in books, aggressive filming and interrogation of staff regarding LGBTIQA+ collections, harassment for displaying inclusive materials, and personal attacks against library workers themselves.³⁵ In 2024, there was a backlash against PLV’s release of a Rainbow Libraries Toolkit to better equip library staff to work with Rainbow families and LGBTIQA+ young people. This resulted in a campaign of misinformation where PLV directly received multiple complaints. A Parliamentarian and the Australian Christian Lobby put a petition before the Victorian Parliament to cease the rollout of the resource (no rollout was planned). PLV have needed to treat the toolkit as an internal document and limit its distribution. Nevertheless, it has been popular with libraries across Australia.³⁶ The Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA) keeps a record of challenges to books in the collection, mostly including materials relating LGBTIQA+ lives, stories, families and sex education.

5.6 **LGBTIQA+ youth events** were also directly impacted. In December 2022, the ‘Glitter Nova’ youth pride celebration at the Victorian Pride Centre was cancelled following protest threats and safety concerns. In June 2023, the Rainbow Ball in Wangaratta was postponed indefinitely by the local council after being targeted by a radical anti-LGBTIQA+ group.

5.7 Many organisations reported ceasing public promotion of events altogether due to safety concerns, suggesting that publicly documented incidents significantly underrepresent the true scale of intimidation occurring across Victoria.³⁷

5.8 **Table of targeted events**

Date	Location	Incident
Sept 2022	Moonee Ponds	Family-friendly drag performance at community picnic cancelled after neo-Nazi protest activity.

³³ Institute for Strategic Dialogue (ISD), *A Year of Hate: Anti-Drag Mobilisation Efforts Targeting LGBTQ+ People in Australia*, 2024. See also GNET., *Extremist Violence Against the Trans and LGBTQI+ Community in Australia: A Review of Recent Events*, 2023; Roose, J., & Khalil, L., *Anti-Government Extremism in Australia: Understanding the Australian Anti-Lockdown Freedom Movement as a Complex Anti-Government Social Movement*, Deakin University / ICCT, 2023; Bergin, J., ‘Anti-trans freedom movement protesters storm local council meeting’, Crikey, 2023; and Davey, M., ‘How anti-vaxxers, conspiracy theorists and the far right came together in Melbourne protests’, ABC News, 2021. See also NSW Parliamentary Inquiry, *Measures to Combat Right-Wing Extremism in New South Wales: Final Report*, para 1.11, p.4.

³⁴ As noted by Public Libraries Victoria. For more information, listen here: <https://www.abc.net.au/listen/programs/bigideas/a-queer-love-letter-to-libraries-/103396158>

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ As reported to the Commissioner by PLV.

³⁷ Direct reports to the Commissioner from LGBTIQA+ services and networks of LGBTIQA+ inclusion workers across Victoria.

Date	Location	Incident
Dec 2022	Victorian Pride Centre, St Kilda	Youth-focused drag event cancelled after threats.
Apr 2023	Casey	Drag workshops for children cancelled amid threats and intimidation.
Apr 2023	Melbourne café (not publicly identified)	Children's drag craft and games event cancelled after threats and abuse.
Apr 2023	Monash Council	Council meeting disrupted by protesters over Drag Storytime proposal.
May 2023	Oakleigh Library / Monash	IDAHOBIT Drag Storytime cancelled following police advice regarding threats of violence.
May 2023	Hume	Drag performer Kitty Obsidian event cancelled before later being rescheduled.
May 2023	Hawthorn Library / Boroondara	Rainbow Storytime singalong cancelled.
May 2023	Regional Victoria (three unnamed councils)	Multiple events involving Drag Queen Frock Hudson were cancelled amid safety concerns.
May 2023	Eltham Library / Nillumbik	Drag Storytime moved online following threats.
May 2023	Woodleigh School, Mornington Peninsula	Planned IDAHOBIT drag event cancelled after organised targeting.
Jun 2023	Wangaratta	Rainbow Ball for LGBTIQ+ young people postponed because of safety concerns and extremist targeting.
Jun 2023	St Kilda Library / Port Phillip	Family Drag Storytime cancelled in person and shifted online.
Nov 2023	Shepparton	Rainbow Storytime cancelled following protest threats; replacement pop-up event later held.
2024	Victoria (statewide)	Libraries reported hiding or privately advertising some LGBTIQ+ events due to threats, bomb threats and doxxing.
Jul 2024	NGV Melbourne	Minus18 Queer Formal targeted by anti-LGBTIQ+ groups attempting ticket disruption and interference.
2024	Merri-bek	Youth queer event reportedly held with limited publicity because of fears of organised targeting.

5.9 Australian research and reporting has also documented widespread experiences of **online hate**, doxxing, threats and harassment targeting sexually and gender diverse communities and individuals, particularly through social media platforms and coordinated digital abuse

campaigns.³⁸ Organisers, performers and community workers have been subjected to coordinated abuse campaigns involving threats of violence, accusations of ‘grooming’, pressure directed at employers and venues, and attempts to force councils and institutions to withdraw support for inclusive programming. The Commissioner has received direct reports from LGBTIQ+ performers, most notably drag performers, targeted by right-wing extremists through stalking, doxxing, threatening communications and vilification, including criminal and civil offences. International research on extremist and online hate ecosystems further demonstrates how digital harassment campaigns can contribute to real-world intimidation and mobilisation.³⁹ In some cases, these campaigns reflected or amplified transnational extremist narratives circulating across social media platforms, including anti-LGBTIQ+ conspiracy narratives increasingly replicated within Australian contexts.⁴⁰

- 5.10 **The Victorian Pride Centre (VPC), St Kilda**, has repeatedly been targeted by anti-LGBTIQ+ acts of vandalism, break-ins and threats against events hosted inside since opening in 2021. In 2026, in response to rising security concerns, the VPC will receive \$1 million over four years through the Australian Government’s Proceeds of Crime Program to strengthen the safety, security and long-term resilience of the centre.⁴¹
- 5.11 The **targeting of other LGBTIQ+ venues** with homophobic graffiti, neo-Nazi imagery and vandalism including the Laird Hotel and Eagle Leather in January 2025 should be understood within a broader context of hate-motivated crimes directed at LGBTIQ+ communities.⁴² In February 2025, Wangaratta Pride Centre was also targeted with graffiti and vandalism.⁴³ These are not simply buildings or businesses, but recognised community safe spaces, some holding significant cultural importance for LGBTIQ+ communities. The impact extends beyond property damage. Such acts can reasonably be understood as intended to intimidate, threaten or create fear within LGBTIQ+ communities and as an attack on the community itself.
- 5.12 The Commissioner is aware that **LGBTIQ+ people have poor experiences of safety across public transport**, due to reporting from community members and services.
- 5.13 There is a substantial body of evidence in Australia which identifies that **sport and movement spaces are unwelcoming and hostile to LGBTIQ+ communities**.⁴⁴ This is most publicly notable in the Australian Football League (AFL), with a high number of homophobic slurs made by players in recent years, months and weeks despite the AFL’s zero-tolerance policy and inclusion work, although there has been inconsistency in its application.⁴⁵
- 5.14 **Rainbow Mob** representatives have provided an outline of impacts specific to First Nations LGBTIQ+SB communities, included at **Appendix 3**.
- 5.15 Most Australian public debates about LGBTIQ+ people in recent years have focused on questions about biological sex characteristics and sex categories. Strident gender normative

³⁸ eSafety Commissioner, *Encounters with online hate*, 2023; and Trans Justice Project report, *Fuelling Hate: Anti-Trans Abuse, Harassment and Vilification*, 2023.

³⁹ Phadke, S., & Mitra, T., *Educators, Solicitors, Flamers, Motivators, Sympathizers: Characterizing Roles in Online Extremist Movements*, 2021; and Diab, A. et al., *Online to Offline Crossover of White Supremacist Propaganda*, 2023.

⁴⁰ GNET/CREST, *Online Gendered Narratives, LGBTIQ+ Targeting, and the Far Right in Australia and the UK*, 2023.

⁴¹ Victorian Pride Centre, *Strengthening Safety, Strengthening Community*, 2026.

⁴² <https://www.smh.com.au/politics/victoria/people-walk-out-tall-melbourne-s-gay-scene-defies-hate-20250715-p5mf4g.html>.

⁴³ <https://www.wangarattachronicle.com.au/news/police-and-courts/baked-beans-and-bigotry-wangaratta-pride-hub-targeted-by-vandals-roh6lb9l>

⁴⁴ Storr, R., ‘The poor cousin of inclusion’: Australian Sporting Organisations and LGBT+ diversity and inclusion. *Sport Management Review*, 24(3), 2021, pp.410-420. See also *Free to Exist* report (link included in ‘Further Reading’).

⁴⁵ <https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2026/apr/24/lance-collard-afl-ban-reduced-homophobic-slur-ntwnfb>

policing forces people into rigid and false binaries. These have a poorly recognised adverse impact on **people with intersex variations**; with women purported to have intersex variations being particularly demonised.⁴⁶ Public debates surrounding intersex athletes during the Olympic Games and elite sporting competitions have had broader impacts on people with innate variations in sex characteristics beyond sport itself. Intense public scrutiny, media commentary and online abuse directed at athletes perceived to be intersex or gender diverse has contributed to stigma and harassment. Intersex advocates have warned the Commissioner that these debates reinforce discrimination, invasion of privacy and hostility toward intersex people more broadly, including through online abuse, vilification and dehumanising commentary.

- 5.16 The Commissioner has met with and received reports from **parents of trans and gender diverse young people** who have described being threatened online or on the phone for publicly supporting their child. This has included threats to remove their child from them, death threats to them and/or their child and family, abusive language and doxxing, where the perpetrator expressed that they knew where the parent lived and worked. In some cases, these incidents have been reported to Victoria Police. The politicisation of families with trans and gender diverse children remains visible in public debate.⁴⁷
- 5.17 **Rainbow Families** (taken here to mean families where one or more parents, carers or prospective parents are LGBTIQ+) have been targeted through public campaigns that question their legitimacy, capacity and safety as parents. During the 2017 marriage equality survey, Victorian schools were warned about children and LGBTI families being targeted by hurtful campaign material.⁴⁸ ABC reporting documented hate speech, vandalism and bullying, including anti-LGBTI posters in Melbourne depicting a child with homophobic messaging.⁴⁹ At the time, research noted that children raised by same-sex parents do just as well as other children, and that the real risk comes from homophobic prejudice and discrimination.⁵⁰ Sustained anti-diverse family campaigning led to online and in person abuse and harassment.⁵¹ Since this time, multiple drag story time Rainbow Family events have been cancelled, postponed or moved online after organised targeting and threats as outlined.
- 5.18 These incidents show that anti-LGBTIQ+ hate does not only target individuals. It targets family relationships themselves: the parent who supports a trans child, the child with LGBTIQ+ parents and the public spaces where Rainbow Families gather safely.
- 5.19 Lesbian, bisexual, queer and trans women can experience intersecting and compounding forms of misogyny, sexism, homophobia, biphobia and transphobia, including sexualised harassment and threats of violence. While online abuse directed at women is increasingly recognised in Australia, these harms are not always disaggregated by sexuality or gender diversity. As a result, the specific experiences of **LGBTIQ+ women** can become obscured within broader discussions of gendered violence and online harm. This can include rape threats, 'corrective

⁴⁶ Carpenter, M., Is It Ever OK to Reclassify Someone Out of Their Birth-Observed Sex Without Personal Consent? How Do We Manage Competing Methods of Classifying Sex? *The American Journal of Bioethics*, 24(11), 2024, pp.18–20.

⁴⁷ <https://doi.org/10.1080/15265161.2024.2399853>

⁴⁸ <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2025/jul/18/victoria-transgender-cults-inquiry-moira-deeming-ntwnfb>
⁴⁸ https://www.abc.net.au/mediawatch/episodes/same-sex-campaign/9972522?utm_campaign=abc_mediawatch&utm_content=link&utm_medium=content_shared&utm_source=abc_mediawatch

⁴⁹ <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-10-11/ssm-same-sex-marriage-respectful-debate-ugly-side/8996500>

⁵⁰ <https://pursuit.unimelb.edu.au/articles/the-kids-are-alright>. Murdoch Children's Research Institute similarly warned that the marriage equality debate was putting children and adolescents at risk, including children in same-sex parented families and families with trans and gender diverse parents. See <https://www.mcri.edu.au/news/news-stories/same-sex-marriage-debate-putting-children-and-adolescents-risk>

⁵¹ Reports to the Commissioner in his previous role as CEO of Switchboard Victoria, an LGBTIQ+ specialist service.

rape', sexualised intimidation, misogynistic abuse, coordinated online harassment and threats targeting women because they are both women and LGBTIQ+, which may be compounded by other identities. It is important to stress the compounding violence and abuse faced by trans women, trans women of colour and other community members with multiple identities, due to the combination of misogyny, transphobia, racism, ableism and/or ageism, etc.

- 5.20 **People who are not LGBTIQ+** but who are allies or visibly gender non-confirming to gender stereotypes have also been targeted with violence, harassment and abuse. According to reports to the Commissioner, some allies, for example, General Practitioners and other medical professionals providing gender-affirming healthcare, have been stalked, received death threats or been otherwise targeted by violence. Furthermore, some masculine-presenting women have been perceived as men (or trans women) in toilets or in sport and movement spaces. Some smaller or more 'feminine' cisgender heterosexual men have been perceived to be gay. This is another consideration when designing prevention initiatives including public safety messaging and supporting and reaching victims of hate and violence.

6. Actions to date

6.1 Actions by the Victorian Government

- 6.1.1 After the anti-trans rally on the steps of Parliament in March 2023, the Victorian Government provided \$900,000 in surge funding to trans and gender diverse services to meet the increase in demand for their services.⁵²
- 6.1.2 Victoria Police is investigating the app-facilitated violent crimes, has made arrests, shared information with other jurisdictions and the media (alongside community organisations and advocates) to raise awareness, and put community safety messaging out through a dating app.
- 6.1.3 Victoria Police and the Commissioner's Office have shared key information with other government departments, agencies and national bodies, including the eSafety Commissioner, and met with a dating app to discuss the crimes.
- 6.1.4 Prejudice motivated crimes and vilification against LGBTIQ+ people are a focus of the *Pride in our future* strategy implementation, which the Commissioner supports.
- 6.1.5 In August 2025, new 'post and boast' laws were passed by the Victorian Government.
- 6.1.6 On 1 September 2025, a machete ban was passed by the Victorian Government following an attack on a gay male couple in the Northcote area, alongside other attacks.
- 6.1.7 In September 2025, the Commissioner and other key LGBTIQ+ stakeholders presented to the Premier's Anti-Hate Taskforce on its relevance for LGBTIQ+ communities.

6.2 Actions undertaken by LGBTIQ+ services

- 6.2.1 Thorne Harbour Health and the Commissioner have made public statements about the dating app attacks and held two Community Safety Forums at the Laird in June 2025 and March 2026,

⁵² <https://www.premier.vic.gov.au/standing-victorias-gender-diverse-communities>

to raise awareness and share safety messaging with impacted community members.

6.2.2 In August 2015, Switchboard Victoria launched a dedicated phone line to provide confidential support and information to LGBTIQ+ victim survivors of tech-facilitated abuse.

6.3 Actions by the Commissioner (in collaboration where noted)

6.3.1 The Commissioner has disseminated targeted community safety messaging and relevant supports and resources (**Appendix 1**) and advocated for strengthened responses via public statements, media engagements (**Appendix 2**), his newsletter and social media posts.

6.3.2 The Commissioner has met with victim survivors of hate crimes.

6.3.3 The Commissioner's Office has co-hosted relevant workshops:

- 'A Conversation about Men's Mental Health' relating to adolescent boys and men in partnership with the Collaborative Centre for Mental Health and Wellbeing and men's health and gender-based violence experts – Wheeler Centre, November 2024.
- A half-day workshop 'The Future We Deserve' bringing the LGBTIQ+ and gender-based violence sectors with key researchers to discuss the dating app attacks, other violence and to strengthen LGBTIQ+ inclusion – Wheeler Centre, December 2025.

6.3.4 The Commissioner's Office has worked in partnership with RMIT University on two projects:

- A Transitional Justice Roundtable looking at truth telling for LGBTIQ+ communities, held in November 2025, with a report that was published in April 2026.
- A Restorative Justice potential project (*currently unfunded and yet to commence*) with the Centre for Innovative Justice for LGBTIQ+ victim survivors of hate crimes, in partnership with Q+Law, the Victorian Government funded LGBTIQ+ specialist legal service.

6.3.5 The Commissioner is working with VEOHRC on implementing anti-vilification legislation and increasing awareness amongst LGBTIQ+ communities of their rights, and work arising from its Anti-Hate Summit, held in December 2025.

6.3.6 Together with other parts of government, the Commissioner is supporting community organisations to develop community safety resources, along with championing other prevention and related initiatives such as those outlined in paragraph 7.2.

6.3.7 The Commissioner has given input into relevant sector workshops and community meetings, including one by ZBGC with the gender-based violence sector in Bendigo to discuss a rise in violence and abuse against trans and gender diverse people in the region.

6.3.8 The Commissioner is a co-Chair/ex-officio member of working groups across government where he has raised awareness of tech-facilitated abuse and hate crimes including education, disability, health and wellbeing, justice, the inter-departmental steering committee for *Pride in our future*, the Family Violence Reform Advisory Group, a Victoria Police reference group and a Local Government Safety Advisory Group.

- The Commissioner, with Thorne Harbour Health and Victoria Police, presented to the Family Violence Reform Advisory Group of specialist family violence and sexual assault sector CEOs on tech-facilitated abuse against LGBTIQ+ communities, April 2026.

6.3.9 The Commissioner's Office has had input into relevant policy frameworks, including Our

Watch's 'National LGBTIQ+ Prevention of Violence Framework', to be finalised later this year.

6.4 Actions undertaken by previous Commissioner, Dr Todd Fernando

6.4.1 In November 2023, the Commissioner's Office held a 'Celebrating Libraries' event in partnership with the State Library and Public Libraries Victoria, to support library staff at the frontline of organized attacks against LGBTIQ+ events. This was turned into a Radio National (RN) Big Ideas podcast 'A Queer Love Letter to Libraries' found [here](#).

6.4.2 Also in November 2023, the Commissioner facilitated an event for LGBTIQ+ performers about 'How to Stay Safe Online' with the eSafety Commissioner and Victoria Police, which provided community safety messaging for performers being targeted and doxxed online.

6.5 Future anticipated actions

6.5.1 The Commissioner will continue to support work to address the impacts of hate and violence by:

- Increasing awareness within LGBTIQ+ communities of:
 - Community safety messaging
 - New LGBTIQ+ rights under anti-vilification laws and of VEOHRC's Community Reporting Tool for vilification; and
 - The *Victims' Rights Charter* and Victims of Crime pathways to support.
- Working with diverse LGBTIQ+ communities to continue to identify and address service gaps and barriers and improve service access.
- Supporting community members who are uncomfortable to report to Victoria Police to report and receive support in other ways (for example, through Switchboard Victoria's helpline and VEOHRC's CRT as relevant).
- Working with community members to support healing for historical experiences of hate, violence and systemic abuses, as identified in the Opening Statement.

7.1 Recommended further reading

7.1.1 RMIT University and the University of Melbourne's paper calling for more consistent definitions of 'digital harms' here: [Digital Harms: Consistency in definition, understanding and action](#). This aligns with socio-ecological models in public health and calls for greater attention to prevention and education. It may provide useful provocations about necessary action to address tech-facilitated gender-based violence targeting gay and bi+ men, and LGBTIQ+ people broadly.

7.1.2 Australian Human Rights Commission's report [Equal Identities: A human rights review of the experiences of trans and gender diverse people in Australia](#) (March 2026).

7.1.3 Jesuit Social Services' [The Adolescent Man Box](#) research, with statistics about attitudes to masculinity, homophobia and transphobia.

7.1.4 Swinburne University, RMIT University, University of South Australia and VicHealth's [Free to](#)

[Exist](#) report documenting participation data on LGBTIQ+ young people in sport and physical activity, and the extent to which sport and movement settings are unwelcoming and hostile to LGBTIQ+ communities in Australia.

- 7.1.5 La Trobe University's **Australian Centre for Sex, Health and Society's (ARCSHS's) suite of resources on LGBTIQ+ communities' experiences**, Australia's largest research program focused on LGBTIQ+ health and wellbeing (with Victorian data breakdowns), including the *Private Lives* and *Writing Themselves In* reports. Found [here](#).
- 7.1.6 Our Watch's 'National LGBTIQ+ Prevention Framework', which will be finalised later this year.

7.2 Initiatives that are working well / recommended resources


- 7.2.1 Rainbow Health Australia's [Pride in Prevention](#) suite of resources (2020).
- 7.2.2 The Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation's (VACCHO's) [Rainbow Mob are My Mob](#) resources, a best practice model for Rainbow Mob inclusion in ACCOs.
- 7.2.3 ZBGC's [Transfemme](#) resources to help end men's violence against trans women.
- 7.2.4 Women's Health in the North and ZBGC's [Allyship in Action: frameworks for trans and gender diverse inclusion in prevention of gender-based violence initiatives](#).
- 7.2.5 La Trobe University's Australian Research Centre for Sex, Health and Society and Transgender Victoria's [Trans Talking Points](#), an evidence-based exploration of sex prevalent issues that impact trans human rights.
- 7.2.6 The Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission's (VEOHRC's) '**Guideline: LGBTIQ+ inclusive workplaces – Employers'** legal duties under the Equal Opportunity Act': www.humanrights.vic.gov.au/resources/guideline-lgbtqa-inclusive-workplaces/
- 7.2.7 Your Community Health and Transgender Victoria's new [Being Valued Toolkit](#), to support safer and more inclusive workplaces for LGBTIQ+ people, supported by WorkSafe.
- 7.2.8 Rural Pride Australia's resource '**Taking Back Our Pride: A Prepare, Respond and Recover approach to rural LGBTIQ+ events and community safety**' (Summary Guide and Full Report), December 2025.
- 7.2.9 Minus18's resource on how to undertake youth events safely, due for release in August 2026.
- 7.2.10 Switchboard Victoria's [Pride in Ageing](#) project.
- 7.2.11 Gender-based violence services including specialist family violence and sexual assault services, community health and mental health services – amongst others – undertaking [Rainbow Tick](#) accreditation.

Recommendations

1. That the Committee considers recommending that LGBTIQ+ hate crimes are addressed within Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) and deradicalisation programming, under the Victorian Government's *Strategy for Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism: 2025-2028*.⁵³
2. That the Committee considers recommending that under the Premier's Anti-Hate Taskforce, the Victorian Secretaries' Board or other mechanism prioritise, coordinate and strengthen 'hate crime and violence prevention' by considering the related workstreams (including CVE, social cohesion, family and sexual violence, anti-racism, prevention, etc) each year. All violence prevention and early intervention programs should explicitly address LGBTIQ+ prejudice and rigid gender norms and be expanded to reach more adolescent boys and young men.
3. That the Committee considers recommending expanded community education and social programs, including:
 - a. To improve literacy around gender-based violence and online harms (including LGBTIQ+ content), including amongst parents / carers and community leaders.⁵⁴
 - b. To support deradicalisation of those who cause harm through restorative justice programs, which support healing for victim survivors, co-designed and run in partnership with LGBTIQ+ services / people with lived experience.
4. That the Committee considers recommending funding for LGBTIQ+ services and community organisations to support victim survivor-centered responses and meet increased service demand and other costs.
5. That the Committee considers advocating to the Federal Government to strengthen the *Online Safety Act 2021* to address algorithmic harm in spreading hate through platform accountability measures, and to improve reporting and response requirements for harmful content on social media and dating and gaming platforms. This could include:
 - a. Algorithms being made 'opt in' in line with the Teach Us Consent 'Fix Our Feeds' campaign.
 - b. Legal obligations on platforms to cooperate promptly and fully with police investigations.
 - c. Duty-of-care obligations on platforms to detect, remove, and report content inciting hate-motivated violence, with referral of relevant cases to the eSafety Commissioner and federal regulators where platform failures are identified.
6. That the Committee considers recommending that VEOHRC's Community Reporting Tool for anti-vilification be reviewed after one year to ascertain its effectiveness, noting that some criminal matters are outside of the scope of vilification. The committee could recommend regular reporting to relevant portfolios and agencies.

⁵³ This may include mainstreaming LGBTIQ+ content into programming including (but not limited to): training for teachers and school counsellors to identify and respond to early signs of radicalisation; and youth-focused programs for young people at risk of involvement or already involved in hate motivated offending.

⁵⁴ This may include mainstreaming LGBTIQ+ content into programming including (but not limited to): critical media literacy and digital literacy resources.

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7. That the Committee considers recommending key Victorian government departments reform their existing data collections to include LGBTIQ+ status or consider recommending the development of LGBTIQ+ data standards for Victorian government departments.
 8. That the Committee considers recommending targeted funding for Victoria Police to update its data systems to allow for the identification and tracking of LGBTIQ+ hate crimes, in alignment with the National Hate Crimes Reporting Database (in development), and VEOHRC's CRT.
 9. That the Committee considers ways of engaging directly with Rainbow Mob, LGBTIQ+ asylum seekers and refugees, multicultural and multi-faith communities, people with a disability, rural, regional and outer-suburban communities, sex workers and potentially other groups, noting the comments that some groups have made to the Commissioner (see **Appendix 3**, paragraph 1.7 and footnote 7).

Appendix 1 – Community Safety Messaging

This has been reviewed by Victoria Police and shared by the Commissioner through his networks.

Safety tips

1.	Always trust your gut instinct
2.	Keep hook ups on the main app. Don't move to other apps such as SnapChat, which have geolocating functions
3.	Be careful about linking to your social media accounts as these may also provide your location
4.	Verify a person's identity before you meet up. Potentially, you could ask for a video from a potential hook up
5.	If you have a second phone/iPad, etc, take screenshots of conversations and profiles as the apps don't let you do this
6.	If you arrange to meet someone, tell friends or family where you are going and provide information about the person you are meeting
7.	Arrange a time to let someone know when you are home safe
8.	Meet in a public place, where there are other people around
9.	Protect your personal information and don't give out too much too soon, including: place of work, address, phone number, financial
10.	Never send money or financial information
11.	Familiarise yourself with app safety features and use as necessary
12.	If you feel uncomfortable, leave and/or stop communicating, it's always ok to say NO
13.	Report underage profiles
14.	Remain vigilant and stay up-to-date with emerging issues on dating apps. Follow organisations and spokespeople working on this matter, including the Commissioner's and Thorne Harbour Health's socials

See also safety advice from Thorne Harbour Health [here](#).

Information for victim/survivors

If you've been attacked, please consider the following:

- In an emergency, always call Triple Zero (000). If you can't get to a phone, ask someone else
- Speaking to an [LGBTIQA+ Liaison Officer](#) at your local police station
- For non-urgent crime, call the Police Assistance Line on 131 444 or [report online](#)
- Call [Crimestoppers \(Online Dating – Crime Stoppers Victoria\)](#)
- If you are unsure or scared to report, contact [Switchboard Victoria](#) for trauma-informed advice about your rights and options on 1800 729 367
- Please consider the following additional support services:
 - [Victims of Crime](#) regarding financial and other assistance
 - [Lifeline](#): phone 13 11 14
 - [Q Life](#): phone 1800 184 527
 - [Thorne Harbour Health](#): phone 1800 134 840

Appendix 2 – Media Engagement Regarding LGBTIQ+ Hate and Hate Crimes

1. <https://www.thesaturdaypaper.com.au/news/law-crime/2025/07/19/apps-used-baiting-tools-homophobic-attacks>
2. [Dating App Turned Hate - The Briefing Podcast](#)
3. [QNews - Gay Bar Laird Hotel graffitied with homophobic vandalism](#)
4. [The Age - People Walk Out Tall - Melbourne's gay scene defies hate](#)
5. Opinion Piece by the Minister for Equality, Vicki Ward, MP: [QNews - Minister for Equality calls to reject hate head on](#)
6. Blog Post for [Prevention Victoria Newsletter](#).
7. 'Masculinity is Not the Enemy' LinkedIn article [here](#).
8. National Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commission 'Voices Towards 2050' Podcast with Commissioner Micaela Cronin for LGBTIQ+ Domestic Violence Awareness Day, 28 May, 2026:
 - Commission website: <https://lnkd.in/gCkgWAY7>
 - Apple Podcasts: https://lnkd.in/grYiJ_YM
 - Spotify: <https://lnkd.in/gM2qjfDW>
 - Podbean: <https://lnkd.in/gFrs3CyF>
 - Amazon Music: <https://lnkd.in/gkPCpYCC>

Appendix 3 – Rainbow Mob / Aboriginal LGBTIQ+SB people

This information has been informed by Rainbow Mob representatives.

Key Quotes

‘The urgency [of this Inquiry] feels like a lot to carry.’ ‘We need to move at the speed of trust.’

‘[This is] the weight of our invisibility. We need to be acknowledged in all different spaces. We need to be seen and resourced. We are invisible in our own Mobs.’

‘Harms come at you in an intersectional way when you are Rainbow Mob.’

‘We are the most researched people. We will keep rising and sharing. But how many times do we put forward our views and then there is nothing? A lot sits on a shelf.’

‘What is often not understood from the outside is how much of oneself goes into arriving at... pride. Coming to understand and accept a queer identity is rarely a simple or linear process. For many of us, it involves years of self-reflection, navigating a world that has not always affirmed who we are, and working through layers of internalised doubt. For Aboriginal people, there is often an additional layer to this journey — one that involves reconciling identity within the context of cultural expectations, community dynamics, and the ongoing effects of colonisation on how identity and belonging are understood. ... The journey toward self-acceptance is meaningful and hard-won. It represents genuine emotional labour — and it is work that should be honoured....’

Key discussion points made about LGBTIQ+ hate, hate crimes and attacks

- Rainbow Mob firstly want to acknowledge our community strengths, including: our cultural legacy, matriarchal heritage, skills and resistance and our relational strength.
- We know that harms are happening to Rainbow Mob.
- We haven’t had enough time for consultation on this issue, to really address and manage the sensitive nature of this work and compounding experiences of harm for Rainbow Mob.
- While some Rainbow Mob shared their stories with the Yoorrook Commission, there is a broad consensus that more could have been done within this truth-telling process to hear about and consider the collective experiences of Rainbow Mob.
- We need to build relationships and service access. This needs to happen within and outside of Aboriginal communities. There is ongoing, significant risk to our community without this in place.
 - Treaty can be leveraged to have these conversations in line with self-determination, but this work needs resourcing; and
 - We need to better resource key organisations, services and peaks, including VACCHO and/or we need to fund a Rainbow Mob peak body.

Historical Violence and underreporting Affecting Rainbow Mob Communities

Case study: Uncle Noel Tovey AM, Aboriginal Elder, performer and gay rights activist.

One historical example connected to Victoria is the experience of Melbourne-born Aboriginal performer and activist Noel Tovey, who publicly recounted being violently assaulted as a young gay man in the 1950s after being perceived to be homosexual. Tovey later reflected on the intersecting impacts of racism, homophobia and social exclusion in shaping the violence he experienced.

The experiences of people like Noel Tovey remind us that anti-LGBTIQ+ hate in Victoria did not begin online and did not begin recently. For much of our history, it was embedded in the law itself.

Noel Tovey, a proud gay Aboriginal man from Victoria, was sent to Pentridge Prison in 1951 after being charged under laws criminalising homosexual acts. On more than one occasion while imprisoned, he planned his suicide. Reflecting later on the experience, he recalled:

'Max was singing an aria from La Traviata when the police arrived. I was very naive. I knew having sex with men was against the law but I didn't understand why it was a crime.'

At his hearing, the judge told him:

'You have been charged with the abominable crime of buggery. How do you plead?'

The maximum sentence was 15 years.

Tovey later described the lifelong impact of criminalisation and stigma:

'Afterwards, only two people would talk to me. I couldn't get a job. I was a known criminal. And it's ironic. Eventually I would have been forgiven by everyone if I had murdered Max, but no one could forgive me for having sex with him.'

Noel Tovey's story is a reminder that hate can be social, cultural and institutional as well as physical, and that the denial of safety and dignity to LGBTIQ+ people was once not only tolerated but enforced by the law itself. Tovey's story highlights an important issue for this inquiry: the limited historical documentation of violence against First Nations LGBTIQ+ people and this should not be mistaken for an absence of harm. Rather, many incidents were never formally reported or recorded due to criminalisation, institutional mistrust and broader historical erasure affecting both Aboriginal communities and LGBTIQ+ communities.

The above case study was submitted by the Commissioner. Please note that all information is on the public record, including within Tovey's autobiography 'Little Black Bastard' by Tovey with Bryony Cosgrove and Audrey O'Connor (Aboriginal Studies Press, 2004).

Uncle Noel Tovey AM died on 11 August 2025 at the age of 90. The above information is submitted with the deepest respect to Uncle Noel and in the knowledge that he was, amongst all his other accolades, a gay rights activist who believed in the need to fight injustice.

'I learned from a very early age that being Aboriginal and homosexual meant you had to fight for your right to exist.'

Uncle Noel Tovey AM.