

Inquiry into anti-LGBTIQ+ hate crimes in Victoria

Submission by Switchboard Victoria.

Acknowledgement of Country

Switchboard Victoria is based on the unceded lands of the Yaluk-ut Weelam clan of the Boon Wurrung peoples and the Wurundjeri People of the Kulin Nation. We pay our respects to all Elders of yesterday and today, and extend those respects to all Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples across this country we know as Australia. We recognise Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples as diverse individuals, with a historic and continuing connection to culture, land and waters – a right and responsibility that was stolen and remains unceded to this day.

We acknowledge the strength and resilience of all Rainbow Mob. We recognise that First Nations peoples have always had rich and diverse understandings and practices of sexuality and gender, and that homophobia and transphobia were introduced under colonial occupation. Switchboard Victoria acknowledges that sovereignty has never been ceded and our work takes place locally and nationally on what always was and always will be Aboriginal land.

In writing this submission, we acknowledge that Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples experience unique and ongoing legacies of settler colonial violence, dispossession, and harm through public and judicial-legal systems. When we advocate for meaningful responses to anti-LGBTIQ+ hate crimes, this must begin with Rainbow Mob. We hope that the outcomes of this Inquiry can set a pathway to interrogate and reform systemic, historical and contemporary harms, centering First Nations ways of being and restoration as a meaningful pathway towards change.

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1. Introduction

Switchboard Victoria welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the Victorian parliamentary inquiry into anti-LGBTQIA+ hate crimes. This submission supports an integrated approach to responding to and preventing anti-LGBTQIA+ hate crimes, with a focus on intersectionality, addressing drivers of violence and jurisdictional collaboration.

As one of Victoria's longest running LGBTQIA+ specialist support and referral services, Switchboard Victoria has provided confidential, non-judgemental information, peer support, and crisis-responsive referrals for more than 30 years. These existing, trusted interventions and programs represent proven mechanisms embedded in our communities that this Inquiry can draw upon and further strengthen as part of a whole-of-system response. Our services operate at the frontline of harm, where we regularly receive direct disclosures from LGBTQIA+ people who have experienced hate-motivated abuse, threats, discrimination and violence.

Switchboard Victoria operates from an intersectional awareness and cultural responsiveness model. We support LGBTQIA+ people whose experiences of hate are compounded by racism, disability, migration status, faith, age, regional isolation, or socioeconomic disadvantage. This positions us to assist the Inquiry in understanding how hate crimes are experienced differently across communities and why tailored approaches are necessary to meaningfully respond to this violence.

Our submission contends that effective responses to LGBTQIA+ hate crimes must move beyond punitive models alone. They must be grounded in prevention, early intervention, trauma-informed care, and accessible community supports that our communities trust. Switchboard Victoria's existing programs provide a clear blueprint for how this can be done and how investment in specialist, LGBTQIA+-led services can significantly strengthen Victoria's approach to safety, justice, and community wellbeing.

Accordingly, Switchboard Victoria strongly advocates for the Inquiry to recognise, engage with, further develop and fund specialist LGBTQIA+ services as central partners in responding to hate

crimes. Strengthening services that communities already turn to will not only improve reporting and outcomes but will also help prevent harm before it escalates to violence. Meaningfully resourcing specialist services also supports sector-wide capacity building, where LGBTIQ+ services can work in partnership with more generalist services and government to build an integrated, collaborative response system.

Switchboard Victoria is committed to supporting this Inquiry through lived experience insights, service-level evidence, and practical recommendations that centre dignity, safety, and equity for all LGBTIQ+ people in Victoria. Recommendations are contextualised through Switchboard's insights gathered from delivering frontline support to LGBTIQ+ communities, and contemporary research on anti-LGBTIQ+ violence prevention and response.

2. Switchboard's Programs

Switchboard's breadth of programming and deep connections to Victorian LGBTIQ+ communities uniquely positions the organisation to identify, understand and respond to the diverse needs of LGBTIQ+ community members, including victim-survivors of anti-LGBTIQ+ hate crimes.

Switchboard works across Victoria and the country to deliver responsive, peer-driven supports for LGBTIQ+ people, their families, loved ones and allies. Programs include:

1. **Rainbow Door** – Providing information, specialist support and referral to LGBTIQ+ people in Victoria experiencing family violence, abuse, mental health concerns, alcohol and other drug concerns and housing insecurity. Staffed by experienced LGBTIQ+ peers, Rainbow Door empowers LGBTIQ+ people and their loved ones to connect with, navigate and access services within a safe and affirming environment.
2. **App-facilitated violence response line (MAPPS Line)** - Through Rainbow Door, Switchboard delivers a [dedicated helpline](#) in response to the escalation in premeditated attacks which have targeted users of dating and meet-up apps.
3. **QLife** – Providing anonymous peer-based support for LGBTIQ+ people and their loved ones. Staffed by experienced LGBTIQ+ peers, this free service is available for those

wanting to talk about a range of issues including sexuality, identity, gender, bodies, feelings or relationships.

4. **Suicide Prevention Program** – Working nationally to provide suicide prevention, intervention and postvention programs and resources, with an emphasis on building community connection through peer-led and lived experience activities.
5. **QTIBPoC Program** - Contributing to greater connection and equity among QTIBPOC (queer, trans and/or intersex Black people, Indigenous people, and People of Colour) in Victoria through free events, workshops and grants created by and for QTIBPOC communities.
6. **Pride in Ageing** - Reducing social isolation, tackling ageism, and working with local communities to build long-term improvements and change for older lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, gender diverse and intersex (LGBTI+) Victorians over 55.
7. **Rainbow Families** - Advocating for and connecting LGBTIQ+ parents, carers and their families to relevant supports, resources, information and local events throughout Victoria.
8. **Training** – Delivering LGBTIQ+ peer-driven training to workplaces and community members, with a focus on LGBTIQ+ suicide prevention, peer support, inclusivity and family and intimate partner violence.

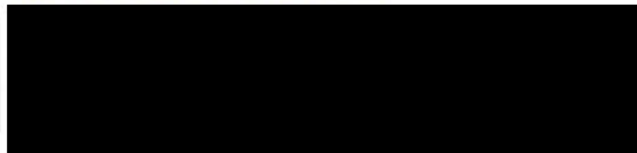
3. Understanding anti-LGBTIQ+ hate crimes

Relevant Terms of Reference:

(1) 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

3.1 Histories of anti-LGBTIQ+ violence

Anti-LGBTIQ+ rhetoric and violence is not novel. It is driven by deeply ingrained gender norms, colonial ideologies and religious strictures that privilege heteronormative and cis-normative ways of being.



Within Victoria, there is a significant legacy of violence, surveillance and disenfranchisement of LGBTIQ+ people, including through law enforcement systems¹. This legacy is enhanced for:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, including Rainbow Mob, who experience unique forms of colonial and racist violence through judicial-legal systems² and have experienced settler violence and dispossession since colonisation began.
- Older LGBTI+ people who lived through histories of criminalisation and the HIV/AIDS epidemic.
- Trans, nonbinary and gender diverse people who experience transphobia through judicial-legal systems.
- QTIBPoC people, who experience systemic racism and racialised profiling through judicial-legal systems.

The history of anti-LGBTIQ+ hate in Victoria is chronicled in the RMIT School of Law 2026 report, *[Transitional Justice and Historical Repair for LGBTIQ+ communities in Victoria](#)*.

Coordinated attacks against LGBTIQ+ people have historically been under-investigated and, in many instances, legitimized or perpetrated by law enforcement³. It is interesting to note that recent spates of app-facilitated crimes mirror this historical violence, including luring tactics used by police when homosexuality was criminalised⁴. This has created deep distrust that means LGBTIQ+ people, particularly Rainbow Mob, QTIBPoC, older LGBTI+ and trans, non-binary and gender diverse community members are hesitant to engage with law enforcement. As such, anti-LGBTIQ+ hate crimes are severely underreported. When an anti-LGBTIQ+ hate crime is

¹ RMIT School of Law (2026). Transitional justice and historical repair for LGBTIQ+ communities in Victoria. https://cdn.thorneharbour.org/media/documents/RMIT_LGBTIQ_report_online.pdf

² Tubex H, Bartels L, Curtis A, Culbong H & Tufuga E 2026. Stories that matter: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's experiences of the Western Australian criminal legal system. Trends & issues in crime and criminal justice no. 725. Canberra: Australian Institute of Criminology. <https://doi.org/10.52922/ti78120>

³ RMIT School of Law (2026). Ibid

⁴ RMIT School of Law (2026). Ibid

reported, community members often cite experiencing stigma, victim-blaming rhetoric, dismissal and minimisation from law enforcement⁵.

Further, LGBTIQ+ people may experience homophobia, transphobia and other forms of discrimination when participating in judicial systems⁶. There are limited protections for LGBTIQ+ people interacting with the justice system and limited capacity for recourse when systemic harm occurs. This may reduce the accessibility of judicial-legal systems for LGBTIQ+ victim-survivors and contributes to systemic mistrust.

Finally, homophobia and transphobia spread through political debate, including the 2017 marriage equality plebiscite and current bans on trans youth healthcare in Queensland, has resulted in the legitimacy of LGBTIQ+ lives being subject to public debate. The legitimisation of anti-LGBTIQ+ rhetoric has led to an increase in physical and verbal hate crimes⁷, and continues to erode confidence in governments both locally and nationally.

Compounding mistrust in judicial-legal and governing systems has set the foundation for the recent waves of app-facilitated violence. It is critical that response, prevention and redress strategies are formulated and implemented with an understanding of how legacies of institutional violence have shaped current socio-political contexts for LGBTIQ+ people, including Rainbow Mob, and the people who enact violence against LGBTIQ+ communities.

3.2 Online hate speech and app-facilitated violence

Over the last several years, there has been a marked increase in online activity, with digital spaces offering primary avenues for connection, identity formation, and cultivating community,

⁵ Bambra, H. (2025, 19 July). Apps used as baiting tools in homophobic attacks. *The Saturday Paper*, <https://www.thesaturdaypaper.com.au/news/law-crime/2025/07/19/apps-used-baiting-tools-homophobic-attacks>

⁶ Mitchell, M., McCrory, A., Skaburskis, I. and Appleton, B. (2022) "Criminalising Gender Diversity: Trans and Gender Diverse People's Experiences with the Victorian Criminal Legal System", *International Journal for Crime, Justice and Social Democracy*, 11(4), pp. 99-112. doi: 10.5204/ijcjsd.2225.

⁷ Trans Justice Project (2023), *Fuelling Hate: Abuse, harassment and violence against trans people in Australia*. <https://transjustice.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/Fuelling-Hate-Anti-Trans-Abuse-Harassment-and-Vilification-WEB-SINGLES-1-1.pdf>

particularly among young people⁸. Drivers for this increase include social isolation, cost of living pressures, and a reduction in the accessibility of in-person spaces, largely due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

In online spaces, belonging is fostered through shared ideologies. Influencers, particularly those reporting on current events, hold significant power in shaping what their audiences see and believe⁹. Anti-LGBTIQA+ political and social actors have weaponised this power, harnessing a need for belonging and connection to propagate harmful misinformation, particularly anti-trans rhetoric¹⁰. Some anti-LGBTIQA+ political and social actors also engage in spreading racially prejudicial narratives about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, increasing the impacts of this hate conduct on Rainbow Mob. This is exacerbated by social media algorithms that prioritise sensationalist content to drive platform engagement, creating a compounding circumstance where influencers are implicitly encouraged to spread hate speech to maintain algorithmic relevance, supporting rapid radicalization and the normalisation of anti-LGBTIQA+ beliefs.

The promotion of hate speech across digital spaces has translated into an increase in physical, verbal, and sexual violence perpetrated against LGBTIQA+ people¹¹. Neo-Nazi groups have protested trans rights outside Victorian Parliament¹², stoking anti-trans hatred and inciting anti-trans violence. Far-right and conservative groups have targeted LGBTIQA+ community events with

⁸Navigating the digital world: social media and the wellbeing of Australia's youth | ACIL Allen. (2025). Acilallen.com.au. <https://acilallen.com.au/insights/navigating-the-digital-world-social-media-and-the-wellbeing-of-australias-youth>

⁹ The rise of news influencers - harmful for democracy? (2025). ABC Friends. https://www.abcfriends.net.au/the_rise_of_news_influencers_a_threat_to_abc

¹⁰ Australian Human Rights Commission (2026). Equal Identities: A human rights review of the experiences of trans and gender diverse people in Australia. https://humanrights.gov.au/media/documents-files-PDFs/strategic-communications/EQUAL_IDENTITIES_FINAL_DIGITAL.pdf

¹¹ Trans Justice Project (2023). Ibid

¹² Ore, A. & Beazley, A. (2023, 20 March). Daniel Andrews says Nazis 'aren't welcome' as Victorian government considers 'further action' following salutes, *The Guardian*, <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2023/mar/19/daniel-andrews-says-nazis-arent-welcome-as-victorian-government-considers-further-action-following-salutes>

threats of violence¹³, including drag queen storytimes, leading to the cancellation of council-sponsored events and impacting children and families' ability to participate in their local communities. In 2025, conservative actors defaced Melbourne LGBTIQ+ venues with homophobic graffiti¹⁴, promoting hateful ideology and rupturing the safety of long-standing spaces that provide connection and reprieve for LGBTIQ+ people¹⁵. These events have a significant, cumulative impact on LGBTIQ+ people's wellbeing, feelings of safety and comfort in public spaces¹⁶.

In addition to the increase in and promotion of hate speech across different platforms and forums, so-called "meet up apps" have been increasingly used to lure gay and bisexual men, trans, non-binary and gender diverse people, into public spaces where they are assaulted, robbed and humiliated¹⁷. Attacks often involve perpetrators filming the victim-survivor and extorting them for money under the threat of videos being shared publicly. These attacks are predominantly executed by groups of young men, who engage in group bonding and masculinity formation through perpetrating collective violence¹⁸. These current waves of violence have caused deep distress within Victorian LGBTIQ+ communities and illuminated the urgent need for a systemic response to anti-LGBTIQ+ hate crimes.

¹³ Kelly, C. (2023, 13 May). Councils call off drag storytime and LGBTQ+ events in Victoria after far-right threats. *The Guardian*, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/may/13/councils-call-off-drag-storytime-and-lgbtq-events-in-victoria-after-far-right-threats>

¹⁴ James, M. (2025, 6 July). Melbourne venues The Laird and Eagle Leather vandalised with homophobic graffiti, *Star Observer*, <https://www.starobserver.com.au/news/iconic-melbourne-venue-the-laird-vandalised-with-homophobic-graffiti/237516>

¹⁵ Arcuri, D. (2025, 22 December). Laird staff come together to erase final traces of homophobic vandalism, *Q News*, <https://qnews.com.au/laird-staff-come-together-to-erase-final-traces-of-homophobic-vandalism/>

¹⁶ Bell, P. (2024, 3 August). In Australia, the threat of homophobic violence lingers, and the danger is proving to be even more pernicious, *ABC News*, <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2024-08-03/threat-of-homophobic-violence-lingers-stubbornly-in-australia/104178206>

¹⁷ Bamba, H. (2025, 19 July). *Ibid*

¹⁸ Rottweiler, B., Clemmow, C., & Gill, P. (2024). A Common Psychology of Male Violence? Assessing the Effects of Misogyny on Intentions to Engage in Violent Extremism, Interpersonal Violence and Support for Violence against Women. *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 37(3), 1–26. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09546553.2023.2292723>

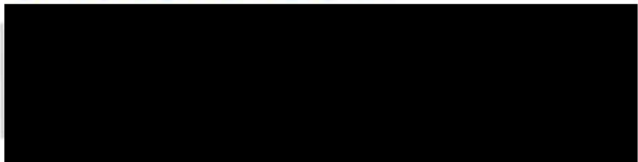
3.3 Switchboard's response to app-facilitated violence (MAPPS Line)

In August 2025, Switchboard established a dedicated phone line to support victim-survivors to access tailored peer support. The phone line was implemented following identified need from LGBTIQ+ community members at a forum convened by Thorne Harbour Health.

The free, confidential helpline supports victim-survivors to be heard, believed and empowered to take action that feels appropriate for them. It is staffed by trained LGBTIQ+ peer workers offering trauma-informed support, referral and information in a safe, affirming environment. Staff provide victim-survivors with information about their rights and options regarding police reporting and medical care, and provide referrals to victims of crime services, legal support, counselling services, financial assistance and other support as required.

3.4 Recommendations

1. Include Rainbow Mob as leaders and partners in responses to, prevention of and redress of historical anti-LGBTIQ+ hate crimes, centering First Nations ways of being and restoration as a meaningful pathway towards change. This should be considered across all subsequent recommendations included in this submission.
2. Strengthen platform responsibility for preventing online harms through national standards and regulatory expectations, including advocating through the ongoing reform of the Online Safety Act 2021 (Cth) for a digital duty of care that explicitly encompasses harms targeting LGBTIQ+ people, including contact and conduct harms, and embeds LGBTIQ+ community expertise in industry codes and risk assessment frameworks.
3. Establish a formal redress body to investigate historical violence, discriminatory policing and institutional harms against LGBTIQ+ people, supporting victim-survivor-led processes for recognition and healing.



4. Amend the Victims' Charter to extend its operation to judicial systems, such that courts are obligated to consider the rights of LGBTIQ+ victims and their families, and, if this is not complied with, affected persons can make a complaint to the Victims of Crime Commissioner.
5. Strengthen accountability mechanisms and training for law enforcement and personnel working within judicial systems responding to anti-LGBTIQ+ hate crimes, including the capacity of law enforcement and judicial personnel to engage in trauma-informed response principles and LGBTIQ+ cultural safety.

4. Prevalence and impacts of anti-LGBTIQ+ hate crimes

Relevant Terms of Reference:

(6) Existing empirical data regarding the prevalence and trends of anti-LGBTIQ+ hate crimes Australia-wide

(7) The impact of anti-LGBTIQ+ hate crimes on diverse LGBTIQ+ communities, including Rainbow Mob, people with disability, and multifaith and multicultural community members

4.1 Data and reporting on anti-LGBTIQ+ hate crimes

Empirical evidence on experiences of anti-LGBTIQ+ hate crimes in Victoria is limited. A lack of funding for community research and inconsistent data collection about LGBTIQ+ communities through state-based and national data systems impacts the sector's ability to understand and respond to anti-LGBTIQ+ hate crimes effectively. In addition, LGBTIQ+ community members may be hesitant to report due to stigma and anonymity concerns. Further, it was identified through the Coronial Inquest into the suicide deaths of five transgender women in Victoria in 2021 that Victoria Police do not accurately capture trans, nonbinary and gender diverse identities through the Law Enforcement Assistance Program (LEAP), highlighting a critical gap in data collection even when community members do report to law enforcement. Until these barriers can be meaningfully responded to, we can assume that any available data underrepresents the true magnitude of anti-LGBTIQ+ hate crimes.

Available evidence on LGBTIQ+ experiences of hate conduct more broadly indicates that LGBTIQ+ people are twice as likely to experience online hate compared to the national average¹⁹. 49 percent of trans and gender diverse people have experienced online hate since 2020, with 10 percent experiencing anti-trans violence²⁰. In addition, 57.6 percent of young LGBTIQ+ people have experienced verbal harassment in their lifetime²¹.

It is critical that contemporary data systems can effectively capture anti-LGBTIQ+ hate crime incidences, supporting a thorough understanding of prevalence, drivers and required responses. This must occur through several integrated modalities in acknowledgement of current barriers, including mistrust in law enforcement and governing systems.

4.2 Hate crimes within family violence contexts

For LGBTIQ+ communities, particularly trans, non-binary and gender diverse people, hate crimes or identity-based violence can occur in the context of family violence²². This may include suppression or corrective practices perpetrated by family of origin, or violence that shames or exploits a victim-survivor's identity in the context of systemic homophobia and transphobia.

In particular, trans women and transfeminine people in relationships with cisgender men may experience identity-based, prejudicial violence from their intimate partner²³ due to pervasive societal ideas that transfeminine people are not suitable partners for cisgender men. The

¹⁹ Australian Human Rights Commission. (2025, August). *Statistics about technology and human rights*. Australian Human Rights Commission. <https://humanrights.gov.au/human-rights-education/stats-and-facts-about-discrimination/statistics-about-technology-and-human-rights>

²⁰ Trans Justice Project (2023). Ibid

²¹ Hill AO, Lyons A, Jones J, McGowan I, Carman M, Parsons M, Power J, Bourne A (2021). *Writing Themselves In 4: The health and wellbeing of LGBTQ+ young people in Australia*. National report, monograph series number 124. Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society, La Trobe University: Melbourne. ARCSHS

²² Safe and Equal and the Zoe Belle Gender Collective (2026). *Risk in context: Trans and gender diverse communities*. https://safeandequal.org.au/wp-content/uploads/RiskInContext_TGD_A4_FINAL_.pdf

²³ Starlady, Fairchild, J., Diamonds, L., & O'Connor, B. (2024). *Responding to the objectification, fetishisation and sexual exploitation of trans women and trans feminine people by cisgender men*. https://zbgc.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/Transfemme_Practitioner_Guide-2024.pdf

[Transfemme](#) project outlines how hateful anti-trans attitudes may impact trans women and transfeminine people who are in relationships with cisgender men.

As such, meaningful responses to anti-LGBTIQ+ hate crimes must include bolstering response and prevention efforts for LGBTIQ+ people experiencing identity-based violence within relationships as well as through coordinated attacks.

4.3 Impacts of anti-LGBTIQ+ hate

Experiences of violence and victimisation create significant health disparities between LGBTIQ+ people and the general population²⁴. Anti-LGBTIQ+ hate crimes can have a devastating, fragmenting impact on the wellbeing of victim-survivors across several domains. These domains of impact interconnect and exacerbate one another, particularly when a person is in crisis or distress following an experience of victimisation.

One Victorian community member has shared their experience of an anti-LGBTIQ+ hate crime in [Appendix 1 A story from a victim-survivor of an anti-LGBTIQ+ hate crime](#).

Insights from the delivery of Switchboard's frontline services, including QLife, Rainbow Door and the specialist response to meet-up app based violence (MAPPS Line), indicate that victim-survivors of anti-LGBTIQ+ hate crimes experience:

- **Emotional and psychological impacts.** Victim-survivors may experience emotional distress, mental ill health, suicidal thoughts and behaviours, and post-traumatic stress. This can lead to increased isolation and withdrawal from communities or activities a victim-survivor previously engaged with. Emotional and psychological harm can also lead to increased alcohol and other drug (AOD) use and exacerbate physical health, occupational, financial, relationship and legal impacts.

²⁴ Amos, N., Lim, G., Buckingham, P., Lin, A., Liddel-Hunt, S., Mooney-Somers, J., Bourne, A., on behalf of the Private Lives 3, Writing Themselves In 4, SWASH, Trans Pathways, Walkern Katatdj, and Pride and Pandemic teams (2023). *Rainbow Realities: In-depth analyses of large-scale LGBTQ+ health and wellbeing data in Australia*. Melbourne, Australia: Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society, La Trobe University.

- **Physical health impacts.** Victim-survivors may endure physical injury from the violence itself, with long-lasting impacts not limited to the immediate aftermath of the violence. Injury requiring medical intervention can also have an impact on victim-survivors' finances and employment. Some victim-survivors may experience the emergence or exacerbation of disabilities.
- **Occupational impacts.** Victim-survivors may experience interruption to work and study due to emotional and psychological impacts, physical injury or needing to take leave to participate in judicial-legal processes. This may lead to reduction in income, loss of employment or disengagement from study, which may exacerbate mental health and psychological impacts, and financial and housing impacts.
- **Financial and housing impacts.** Following an experience of anti-LGBTIQ+ violence, victim-survivors may seek to leave their local area to distance themselves from the site of the hate crime. This may become more urgent where perpetrators are extorting victim-survivors and/or threatening to attend their home or workplace, as has happened in the recent spate of app-based violence. In regional or remote areas, it may also be difficult to maintain anonymity when an instance of violence occurs. Victim-survivors may experience difficulty finding a new place to live, which can result in emotional distress and lead to homelessness. Further, victim-survivors may be unable to afford to access appropriate medical and psychological care or pursue legal recourse due to financial barriers.
- **Family and relationship impacts.** LGBTIQ+ people are less likely than others to be able to rely on families of origin for support due to previous family of origin violence, the fear of not being believed, or the fear of being 'outed' through disclosure of victimisation. Material stressors, including financial, physical and occupational impacts, can also place strain on a victim-survivor's relationships or family structures. Further, people connected to a victim-survivor may fear becoming a target of violence through association, causing rupture within the victim-survivor's relationships and enhancing feelings of stigma and shame. This can result in immense emotional distress for a victim-survivor and exacerbate physical, occupational, and financial and housing impacts.
- **Legal impacts.** Victim-survivors of LGBTIQ+ hate crimes who exercise the right to make a formal police report will commonly be required to contend with multi-year engagement

with police and legal/court processes. Formal participation in formal legal proceedings as a witness/victim of crime can be emotionally, psychologically and financially impactful. Victim-survivors of LGBTIQ+ hate crimes commonly report a high emotional toll of participating in formal criminal proceedings and a perception of limited/minimal consequences for the offenders, even in cases where there is a finding of guilt. Like victims of many violent crimes, victim-survivors of LGBTIQ+ hate crimes will often fear retribution or further violence perpetrated by those they have reported to police.

Additional barriers to victim-survivors seeking support may include:

- Fear of not being believed or being blamed
- Fear of being 'outed' to family, friends, workplaces and community as an unintended consequence of a police investigation or prosecution
- Previous negative experiences with law enforcement
- Loss of privacy
- Exacerbation of internalised stigma and shame
- Reporting processes that require use of the victim-survivor's legal name, particularly for trans, nonbinary and gender diverse people
- Fear of further violence and retribution from offenders or their associates, particularly given the risk of there being no finding of guilt or minimal consequence following an investigation or prosecution.

Intersectional community members face higher rates of victimisation²⁵ and may face additional barriers to reporting and accessing support. Intersectionality refers to the ways that multiple aspects of a person's identity, including sexual orientation, gender, ethnicity, race, religious identity, age, geography, visa status, and socioeconomic status, among other characteristics, can

²⁵ Mitchell, M., Anderson, J., Amos, N., Hill, A., McNair, R., Carman, M., & Bourne, A. (2026). Ibid

create overlapping experiences of discrimination and marginalisation²⁶. Barriers for intersectional community members may include:

- Language and cultural barriers, including the need for an interpreter
- Other access barriers, including challenges engaging via certain support modalities (e.g. phone lines, webchats)
- Reticence to engage with judicial-legal systems due to immigration or visa status
- Generalist supports may not be equipped to respond to intersectional support needs.

In addition, insights from Switchboard’s frontline services indicate that Rainbow Mob experience unique barriers to accessing support, including:

- Distrust of services, fostered through an ongoing legacy of settler colonial violence, dispossession and disenfranchisement towards First Nations people
- Available services being directive, rather than relational
- Disconnection from other Mob
- Being identified as a support person within their community and therefore being unable to easily seek help through kinship systems.

Community members who are already vulnerable, particularly those experiencing isolation, are more likely to be victims of hate crimes²⁷. Isolation is weaponised by perpetrators to lure community members into situations that may be unsafe (under the guise of connection). Isolated community members may also be less likely to access support networks or report their experiences, particularly if they are being extorted. This can result in increased isolation and withdrawal and compound the impacts of this violence.

²⁶ Victorian Government (2021). Understanding intersectionality. <https://www.vic.gov.au/understanding-intersectionality>

²⁷ Mitchell, M., Anderson, J., Amos, N., Hill, A., McNair, R., Carman, M., & Bourne, A. (2026). Anti-Queer Violence in Australia: An Intersectional Analysis of Victimization Among LGBTQA+ Adults. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 73(8), 1850–1887. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00918369.2025.2530133>

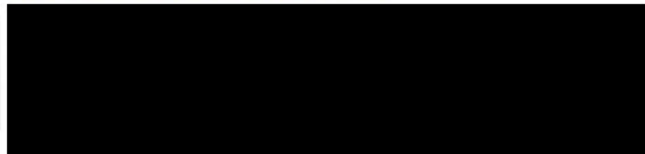
The barriers experienced by victim-survivors are not reflective of the victim-survivor's capacity, but indicative of how the systems currently in place to respond to and prevent anti-LGBTIQ+ hate crimes must be strengthened to meet the diverse needs of LGBTIQ+ communities.

Foundationally, existing systems place the burden on victim-survivors to demonstrate that harm has occurred, seek support, and drive accountability for perpetrators. While this persists, victim-survivors of anti-LGBTIQ+ hate crimes will continue experiencing barriers to reporting and help-seeking. As such, there is an urgent need for a response sector that:

- Is effectively resourced to provide tailored, intersectional supports to victim-survivors, including through housing, employment, mental health and family violence services, where victim-survivors may present for support.
- Can implement meaningful consequences for perpetrators through judicial-legal systems and behaviour change programs.

4.4 Recommendations

6. Support data collection around incidences of anti-LGBTIQ+ hate crimes through:
 - a. Investment in community-based reporting mechanisms that are able to provide trauma-informed support to victim-survivors during a report or disclosure, including referrals to other appropriate supports.
 - b. Investment in LGBTIQ+ community-led health research to support the growing evidence base around LGBTIQ+ community wellbeing.
 - c. The establishment of a hate crimes data system that can effectively integrate data from law enforcement, justice, health and community sectors.
 - d. Working with Victoria Police to urgently implement adjustments to the Law Enforcement Assistance Program (LEAP) to safely and effectively collect data on trans, non-binary and gender diverse people.
7. Invest in LGBTIQ+ family violence prevention in acknowledgement of identity-based violence experienced by LGBTIQ+ people within family violence contexts.



8. Invest in community-led efforts working to address violence against trans people, including trans women and transfeminine people in relationships with cisgender men, in recognition of disproportionate rates of online hate and violence perpetrated against trans people.
9. Invest in community-led efforts working to address violence against Rainbow Mob, in recognition of colonial histories of violence, dispossession and racism.

5. Supporting victim-survivors of anti-LGBTIQA+ hate crimes

Relevant Terms of Reference:

(4) Existing public and online safety initiatives supporting LGBTIQA+ community members who have experienced hate crimes, including how these supports could be strengthened

5.1 The role of peer services

Where systemic barriers and previous experiences of stigma or victim-blaming render mainstream services and judicial-legal systems inaccessible, community-led services can meet an essential relational support need for LGBTIQA+ victim-survivors.

Talking to a peer can provide victim-survivors with solidarity and a sense of community. In understanding that many victim-survivors experienced violence when seeking connection, this becomes especially important in meeting the needs of victim-survivors and allowing them to feel heard and understood. Talking to another LGBTIQA+ person may alleviate fear of experiencing discrimination during a disclosure. In addition, another LGBTIQA+ person may be more likely to understand the systemic barriers experienced by the victim-survivor, equipping them to help a victim-survivor access supports that meet their needs.

Safety is enhanced through anonymous, episodic support options, such as QLife, where a person does not have to disclose identifying details to access trauma-informed care. Insights from Switchboard's frontline services indicate that QLife as an anonymous peer service, particularly one that is delivered after-hours when distress is more likely, provides an essential and accessible entry point for help seeking. QLife can provide a victim-survivor with the space to explore their

options, needs and experiences in a judgement-free environment. This can include making decisions about police reporting. QLife can refer callers to further supports as relevant, including Rainbow Door and the MAPPS Line, which can provide holistic system navigation and case management for victim-survivors. Rainbow Door and the MAPPS Line can assist victim-survivors to access counselling, legal advice, financial assistance and housing. Anonymous and integrated support is integral to meeting the needs of victim-survivors, with LGBTIQ+ community-led services best placed to provide this specialist care.

5.2 Increasing the availability of peer-led services

Despite the value of peer-led services in supporting victim-survivors, services are currently not resourced to effectively meet demand, resulting in wait times and additional barriers for community members who are in urgent need of support. It is essential that community-led services are resourced to meet growing demand and deliver support to LGBTIQ+ victim-survivors when they need it most.

5.3 Service integration

While peer support provides specialist, tailored care, LGBTIQ+ people may not always present to a community-led service. This may be due to limited availability of LGBTIQ+ services, not being 'out' within their community, or the desire to seek support for a discrete issue (e.g. housing). As such, it is critical that the broader community support sector is equipped to work with LGBTIQ+ victim-survivors. LGBTIQ+ community-led organisations should be resourced to work in partnership with broader sector organisations, improving referral pathways, practice linkages and building the capacity of other services to provide tailored support to LGBTIQ+ communities. LGBTIQ+ community-led organisations can also work with governments and law enforcement to meaningfully address harms and distrust within LGBTIQ+ communities, supporting broader cultural progress towards a safe, integrated response system at all levels of healthcare and policy.

5.4 Recommendations

10. Invest in and effectively resource community-led organisations to meet current demand for support, including anonymous, after-hours and integrated case management support

options, to enable the provision of culturally safe services for LGBTIQ+ people impacted by hate. This includes investing in community-led organisations and initiatives that can effectively respond to intersectional community needs.

11. Connect with Rainbow Mob in identified roles across LGBTIQ+ organisations, including Rainbow Health Australia, Switchboard Victoria and Thorne Harbour Health, to understand what an integrated systems response for Rainbow Mob looks like.
12. Invest in partnership-building and practice leadership activities across community-led organisations to enhance intersectional service delivery, including between LGBTIQ+ organisations and:
 - a. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations, to strengthen collaboration and responses for Rainbow Mob
 - b. Multicultural and multifaith organisations, including those working with migrants, refugees, people seeking asylum and international students
 - c. Organisations supporting people with experiences of disability to enhance accessibility of services for LGBTIQ+ people impacted by hate.
13. Invest in partnership building and practice leadership between LGBTIQ+ organisations and family violence, employment, housing and alcohol and other drug services, to increase referral pathways, sector integration and the capacity of the social supports sector to provide care to LGBTIQ+ people.

6. Preventing anti-LGBTIQ+ hate crimes

Relevant Terms of Reference:

(2) Current strategies to counter anti-LGBTIQ+ hate crimes, particularly among young people and how these could be strengthened

(3) Current anti-LGBTIQ+ hate crime prevention initiatives, and how these could be strengthened

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

(8) Interjurisdictional strategies and methods to combat anti-LGBTIQ+ hate crimes across borders

(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.

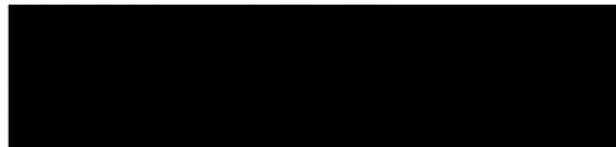
6.1 Countering anti-LGBTIQ+ hate

There are few initiatives focused on prevention of anti-LGBTIQ+ hate crimes. Due to resourcing limitations, services supporting victim-survivors must prioritise response after an incident as the most urgent site of service provision. Strategies to meaningfully counter anti-LGBTIQ+ hate crimes must address the drivers of this violence and resource LGBTIQ+ organisations to engage in targeted prevention efforts, as well as response.

The perpetration of anti-LGBTIQ+ hate crimes reinforces patriarchal ideas around dominance, consent and control. A masculinised ‘in-group’ enacts violence against a feminised or racialised ‘out-group’, seeking to correct or suppress any expression that is perceived as non-normative or deviant²⁸. This is visible in:

- App-facilitated ambush attacks executed by groups of young men, where violence enacted against an LGBTIQ+ person serves as a social connection exercise that bonds perpetrators through the performance of dominant masculinities.

²⁸ Rottweiler, B., Clemmow, C., & Gill, P. (2024). Ibid



- Cisgender men’s violence against trans women, where homophobia, transphobia and feelings of shame, including feelings related to what attraction to trans women means for the cisgender man’s masculinity, manifests in identity-based violence.
- Identity-based violence perpetrated against Rainbow Mob and QTIBPoC people, where colonial ideas of supremacy and dominance legitimise violence against First Nations and other racialised people.

Countering this behaviour requires coordinated efforts to:

- Deconstruct the rigid gender norms that necessitate violent reinforcement.
- Reject anti-LGBTIQ+ behaviour and promote strengths-based messaging about LGBTIQ+ communities.
- Support respectful relationships, particularly between LGBTIQ+ and non-LGBTIQ+ people in romantic, sexual or intimate relationships.
- Address systemic racism and colonial ideologies that lead to hatred and violence towards Rainbow Mob and other QTIBPoC people.

For young people, preventative efforts must include a foundational focus on inclusion. A 2020 report found that 60.2 percent of young LGBTIQ+ people felt uncomfortable at high school due to their identity²⁹, highlighting the progress that still needs to be made to ensure LGBTIQ+ young people feel included in school-based settings. Respectful relationships education is essential to support inclusive interpersonal engagement and consent practices amongst young people, and media literacy education can mitigate radicalisation and absorption of misinformation related to LGBTIQ+ people, particularly anti-trans rhetoric.

In addition, it is critical that tailored prevention approaches are developed and implemented that respond to the intersectional needs of Rainbow Mob, QTIBPoC people, older LGBTI+ people, and trans, nonbinary and gender diverse people, in recognition of how historical contexts and other drivers, including racism, shape experiences of anti-LGBTIQ+ hate. Approaches should be developed through meaningful community leadership and adequate resourcing of community-led

²⁹Hill AO, Lyons A, Jones J, McGowan I, Carman M, Parsons M, Power J, Bourne A (2021). Ibid



organisations. For Rainbow Mob, this includes the meaningful implementation of community-led research and best practice guidance, including the Walkern Katatdjin Roadmap³⁰ and the Rainbow Mob are My Mob Model³¹.

More broadly, social campaigns play a powerful role in interrupting cycles of mis- and disinformation. Government should facilitate campaigns that clearly reject anti-LGBTIQ+ violence, promote strength-based messaging about LGBTIQ+ communities, and offer alternative pathways for community connection for young people at risk of radicalisation.

6.2 Interjurisdictional collaboration to prevent and respond to hate crimes

Prevention approaches must be collaborative, with government working with LGBTIQ+, violence prevention, gender equity, men's health and youth organisations to implement holistic strategies. This facilitates the development of a shared prevention framework that can address common drivers of prejudice-based violence, as well as build the capacity of mainstream organisations to provide support to LGBTIQ+ people.

The Commissioner for LGBTIQ+ Communities, the Minister for Prevention of Family Violence, the Minister for Equality and the Minister for Men and Boys are particularly well-placed to provide jurisdictional leadership and effectively integrate expertise from relevant response and prevention sectors.

³⁰ Liddel-Hunt, S., Hayward, L., Hill, B., Perry, Y., Wilson, M., Stretton, N., Anderson-Hyde, MJ, Andrews, L., Bagshaw, D., Baptist, R., Basset-Bokic, N., Berry, M., Blow, T., Cameron, D, Cox, L., Daglas, K., Dau, D., Devezy, Y., Eddy, S., Fowler, J., Henderson, C., Hill, B., Hill, J.H.L., Hunt, A., James, J., Lee, T., Makuru, K., Morrison, J., Riley, Nathan; S., Dion; S., Natalie; Thorne, S., Wade, A., Waples-Crowe, P., Weir, V., Wells, K., Wishart, E., Uink, B. & Lin, A., (2025) Walkern Katatdjin Phase 3 Roadmap Report. Perth, Western Australia.

³¹ Powell, D. & Basset-Bokic, N. (2026). Rainbow Mob are my Mob: Best Practice Model for Rainbow Mob Inclusion in ACCOs.
<https://cdn.intelligencebank.com/au/share/NJA21J/1zZDp/2d4gP/original/Rainbow+Mob+Are+My+Mob+Best+Practice+Model+for+Rainbow+Mob+Inclusion+in+ACCOs+Project+Report>

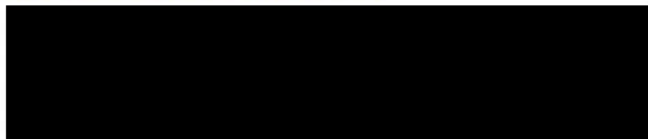
6.3 Recommendations

14. Invest in the implementation of the Walkern Katatdjin Roadmap and Rainbow Mob are my Mob Model as essential best practice guidance for working with Rainbow Mob to support the prevention of anti-LGBTIQA+ hate crimes.
15. Invest in community-led organisations as central partners in violence prevention and response, enabling the development of community-led targeted prevention responses. This includes investing in organisations that can effectively meet prevention needs relevant to Rainbow Mob, older LGBTI+ people, QTIBPoC people, and trans, nonbinary and gender diverse people.
16. Expand inclusion and respectful relationships education in schools to ensure they are effectively representing LGBTIQA+ identities and providing alternatives to harmful gender norms.
17. Expand media literacy education in schools to support the identification of dis- and misinformation.
18. Implement government-led social programming and campaigns that address the drivers of anti-LGBTIQA+ violence, developed in partnership with relevant expertise from LGBTIQA+, violence prevention, gender equity, men's health and youth organisations.

7. Full List of Recommendations

1. Include Rainbow Mob as leaders and partners in responses to, prevention of and redress of historical anti-LGBTIQA+ hate crimes, centering First Nations ways of being and restoration as a meaningful pathway towards change. This should be considered across all subsequent recommendations included in this submission.
2. Strengthen platform responsibility for preventing online harms through national standards and regulatory expectations, including advocating through the ongoing reform of the Online Safety Act 2021 (Cth) for a digital duty of care that explicitly encompasses harms targeting LGBTIQA+ people, including contact and conduct harms, and embeds LGBTIQA+ community expertise in industry codes and risk assessment frameworks.

3. Establish a formal redress body to investigate historical violence, discriminatory policing and institutional harms against LGBTIQ+ people, supporting victim-survivor-led processes for recognition and healing.
4. Amend the Victims' Charter to extend its operation to judicial systems, such that courts are obligated to consider the rights of LGBTIQ+ victims and their families, and, if this is not complied with, affected persons can make a complaint to the Victims of Crime Commissioner.
5. Strengthen accountability mechanisms and training for law enforcement and personnel working within judicial systems responding to anti-LGBTIQ+ hate crimes, including the capacity of law enforcement and judicial personnel to engage in trauma-informed response principles and LGBTIQ+ cultural safety.
6. Support data collection around incidences of anti-LGBTIQ+ hate crimes through:
 - a. Investment in community-based reporting mechanisms that are able to provide trauma-informed support to victim-survivors during a report or disclosure, including referrals to other appropriate supports.
 - b. Investment in LGBTIQ+ community-led health research to support the growing evidence base around LGBTIQ+ community wellbeing.
 - c. The establishment of a hate crimes data system that can effectively integrate data from law enforcement, justice, health and community sectors.
 - d. Working with Victoria Police to urgently implement adjustments to the Law Enforcement Assistance Program (LEAP) to safely and effectively collect data on trans, non-binary and gender diverse people.
7. Invest in LGBTIQ+ family violence prevention in acknowledgement of identity-based violence experienced by LGBTIQ+ people within family violence contexts.
8. Invest in community-led efforts working to address violence against trans people, including trans women and transfeminine people in relationships with cisgender men, in recognition of disproportionate rates of online hate and violence perpetrated against trans people.
9. Invest in community-led efforts working to address violence against Rainbow Mob, in recognition of colonial histories of violence, dispossession and racism.



10. Invest in and effectively resource community-led organisations to meet current demand for support, including anonymous, after-hours and integrated case management support options, to enable the provision of culturally safe services for LGBTIQ+ people impacted by hate. This includes investing in community-led organisations and initiatives that can effectively respond to intersectional community needs.
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16. Expand inclusion and respectful relationships education in schools to ensure they are effectively representing LGBTIQ+ identities and providing alternatives to harmful gender norms.
17. Expand media literacy education in schools to support the identification of dis- and misinformation.
18. Implement government-led social programming and campaigns that address the drivers of anti-LGBTIQ+ violence, developed in partnership with relevant expertise from LGBTIQ+, violence prevention, gender equity, men's health and youth organisations.

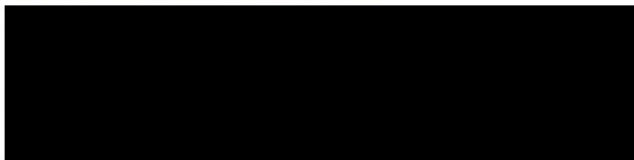
8. Conclusion

This submission has outlined the history of anti-LGBTIQ+ hate crimes, the impacts of anti-LGBTIQ+ hate on our communities, and the urgent need for integrated, system-wide responses to anti-LGBTIQ+ hate crimes. This includes:

- Effectively resourcing community-led initiatives that can deliver intersectional, trauma-informed support to victim-survivors.
- Providing safe avenues for reporting and justice-doing.

Switchboard is uniquely positioned to be a collaborative leader in this response system, with our breadth of peer-led programs effectively set up to deliver tailored support to victim-survivors of anti-LGBTIQ+ hate crimes.

We recognise that this document cannot speak to the full experiences of our communities or the depth of Switchboard's program insights. We welcome any opportunity to provide evidence and contribute further to this Inquiry or any subsequent response activities.



Appendix 1: A story from a victim-survivor of an anti-LGBTIQA+ hate crime

This story was recorded through a discussion between Person A and a Switchboard staff member.

Person A has consented for Switchboard to include their story as part of this submission.

About Person A

Age range: 30-40

Gender identity: Transmasculine/non-binary

Sexual orientation: Queer

Disability or other intersecting identities: Neurodivergent

Context and Background

When did the incident occur? August 2024

Where did it occur? Near the corner of Johnston Street and Brunswick Street, Fitzroy, VIC

Relevant life circumstances at the time: Person A indicated that they were at the start of their understanding of their trans/non-binary gender identity. I believe that this is important to note as it promotes a better understanding of the impact of the event described below.

Description of the Incident(s)

Person A was going out on a 'first date' with someone who they had met. The date had been progressing well. As they were out on the street in Fitzroy, Person A kissed their partner at the end of the date. They were in public on the sidewalk near the corner of Brunswick and Johnston Street in Fitzroy.

During the kiss, Person A heard someone 'wolf whistle' and then shout something derogatory at them as they walked past and saw the kiss. They cannot remember the shout verbatim, but their response was to shout "Fuck off" back at the individual who whistled and shouted at them as they were saying goodbye to their date.

In response to them shouting "Fuck off" to the passerby, he turned and then started to act in a manner perceived as aggressive and confrontational. He started to use homophobic slurs and proceeded to follow them still shouting at them, as the two of them walked away.

Person A recalls, that as they turned away and started walking away, they heard the slurs turn to transphobic ones, and recalls the person shouting, “if you are going to dress like a man, you must fight like a man”.

Person A describes feeling frozen and notes that they stopped talking. They note that their date had started to respond to the agitator and suggested they keep walking away. In response to this the person who had followed them started with racist slurs, telling Person A’s date to “go back to where you came from” [It is important to note that the person in question was born in Australia]

The incident took place around 10:30 on a Saturday night, in a part of Fitzroy that people in the area. It was noticed that nobody stepped in to help or to de-escalate the situation in any way or to help Person A and their date.

Once they were able to move far enough away from the person causing the altercation and incident, Person A described saying “good-night” to their date and being so upset that they walked around for over two hours trying to calm down and to process what had taken place. They describe a feeling of “being blacked out” for a part of that walk.

They did not report the incident to any authorities, but they were able to talk to friends about the experience, and subsequently also talk to their family. They received support from all of these parties. They note that being able to tell someone and talk to someone was something that was a tremendous help.

They also eventually spoke to their psychologist about this experience, but they mention that it took a while for them to feel confident and comfortable enough to talk through that experience with them. They note that it has helped and that their work with the psychologist continues to help them understand what happened and to support them.

Impact on the Individual

Immediate impacts: *As per the description of the events above, it is clear that there were immediate feelings of - Fear, Anger, Disbelief, Safety, and feelings of “blacking out”, need to take time to process / decompress after the incident*

Ongoing impacts: *Person A describes their sense of safety still being a consideration when they move into public spaces with partners or in similar circumstance. They believe that they are now more aware of who is around them in public, and the need to understand and check out the public spaces that they are moving into in order to ensure their safety. They have acknowledged the importance and value of the therapy that they have received and the way that it has helped to decrease feelings of ongoing stress and anxiety.*

Person A articulated that one of the sad ongoing impacts is the way they move in the world in regards to the next dates that they went on with other people, and at the start of their relationship with their current partner. They saw themselves being much more hesitant to display affection in public, even hand holding. With therapy this has changed and they are much better now, but they believe that the incident had a profound affect on it.

Impact on safety, wellbeing, or community participation: This incident has made them consider and think about what “safe spaces” are and how important it is to have people around you who you know and who you can trust. They described the need to “suss out” the areas that they might frequent and to not just assume that it was going to be safe without having been there before (e.g. Fitzroy). We spoke about them having been back to that area only infrequently, and that there was a sense of fear as they entered the suburb again, even after a time away.

A different factor to consider regarding community connection may be drawn from the individual that was on the date with Person A. This person (the date) was newly out, and Person A recalls that this was one of her first queer dates. It was awful that she was subject to such abuse on one of her first dates and it would not be difficult to assume that this impacted her connection to community and her own feelings of safety

Responses and Reporting

Was the incident reported to authorities? No

If not reported, reasons why: *With regards to reporting the incident it is worth noting that Person A indicated that they didn't feel safe reporting it to police, nor would they if this happened today. They would much rather tell their friends, family, queer community and therapist. VicPol's history with*

the LGBTQIA+ community and in particular the trans and gender diverse community in recent years does not make Person A trust them.

They felt that they had support of friends and family and that this enabled them to understand and talk through what had happened. They have also acknowledged the importance of having a therapist, with whom they were able to work through the incident and who helped them over this period of time understand what happened.

What Would Have Helped?

Supports or actions that would have helped at the time: *We spoke about the need for community to understand what to do in situations where they see this happening to Queer folk. How to educate people to step in and to help.*

What could prevent similar harm in the future: *We spoke about the importance of strong education programs and the need for individuals to be able to access support from organisations if they did not have the friends and family support at home.*

Key Themes and Organisational Observations

Identified themes:

- *Transphobia – the pervasive and corrosive effect of transphobia on individuals who are working through their gender identities. Particularly at times of feeling new and vulnerable to other peoples’ perceptions or scorn or abuse.*
- *Links between transphobia/homophobia and racism – this story identifies the link between racism and transphobia and homophobia, and how it is a problem that must be tackled systemically and with an eye on many different stakeholders*
- *Need to have active and clear support – Not many participants are brave enough to come forward and tell their story, as they do not feel that they have the support or did have the support of people who would believe them. This is a story that highlights how important people, organisations and systems are where people can be heard and believed. It is important to credit to the support of the friends and family in this story.*

- *Ongoing and pervasive nature of the impact – we shared that it was never just a situation where the impacts were not felt continuously. We see from this story that there are still residual impacts on the individual, be they for fear of their physical safety in public spaces or in a broader context of their own mental health and safety.*

Terms of Reference in the Hate Crimes Inquiry

The Hate Crimes Inquiry has nine Terms of Reference. This submission could apply and contribute to the following terms of reference:

- (3) current anti-LGBTIQA+ hate crime prevention initiatives, and how these could be strengthened;*
- (4) existing public and online safety initiatives supporting LGBTIQA+ community members who have experienced hate crimes, including how these supports could be strengthened;*
- (7) the impact of anti-LGBTIQA+ hate crimes on diverse LGBTIQA+ communities, including Rainbow Mob, people with disability, and multifaith and multicultural community members;*
- (9) the relevant work of the Commissioner for LGBTIQA+ Communities, relevant government advisory groups, including but not limited to relevant community, health and law enforcement organisations to combat anti-LGBTIQA+ hate crimes.*

Appendix 2. Media release: Support for LGBTIQ+ victims of app-facilitated violence

Thursday 21 August 2025

SUPPORT FOR LGBTIQ+ VICTIMS OF APP-FACILITATED VIOLENCE

From 10am on Thursday 21 August, Switchboard Victoria will offer a dedicated helpline providing confidential support and information to LGBTIQ+ people who have experienced targeted app-facilitated homophobic and/or transphobic violence. This free, confidential service will be available via Switchboard's Rainbow Door helpline and operate 5 days a week, from 10am - 5pm, Tuesday to Saturday. Staffed by trained LGBTIQ+ peer workers, the service will offer trauma-informed support and information in a safe, affirming environment. Following the recent community forum organised by Thorne Harbour Health, Switchboard is establishing a dedicated helpline in response to the escalation in premeditated attacks targeting users of dating and meet-up apps, in particular gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men. Across the country, there has been a pattern of perpetrators using fake profiles to lure victims to meetings, where they are subsequently ambushed, robbed, assaulted, filmed and humiliated with homophobic abuse. In some cases, footage of these attacks has been used to expose, threaten and/or extort victims.

Callers to the helpline can expect to be believed, supported, and provided with information about their rights and options - including accessing legal help, counselling, and police reporting pathways. Our aim is to empower victim-survivors to make the best decision for themselves. In addition to Switchboard's dedicated helpline, Thorne Harbour Health has shared [community safety tips](#) and reduced wait times for key services, including:

- Mental health counselling*
- Alcohol and other drug (AOD) support*
- Family violence services*

For more than 30 years, Switchboard Victoria has provided LGBTIQ+ peer support services to Victorian communities. This specialised helpline will operate until September 30, subject to demand.

If you, or someone you know has experienced violence and/or been lured by fake profiles on hookup or dating apps, you can contact Switchboard for free, confidential support, information and referral options.

Call 1800 729 367 and press 1

Quotes attributable to Jenna Tuke, CEO of Switchboard Victoria

- *“Switchboard aims to be responsive to emerging issues for LGBTQIA+ Victorians. The impacts of the recent spate of hate crimes facilitated through meet up and dating apps have reverberated through the LGBTQIA+ community. It is vital that victim-survivors are able to access confidential support, referral and information about their rights.”*
- *“We know that there are very low police reporting rates for sexual assault, hate crimes and targeted attacks. Those who have reported will represent only a fraction of those who have been victimised. Switchboard will be providing a safe and confidential place for people to access support and information about their rights and options.”*
- *“Barriers to accessing support include the fear of not being believed, the fear of being blamed for the assault and the fear of losing control over who knows what has happened to them.”*
- *“This situation is primed for victim blaming narratives, which are likely to compound the fear of being outed and exposed.”*

Quotes attributable to Joe Ball, Victorian Commissioner for LGBTIQ+ Communities:

- *“The recent app-facilitated attacks have left many people fearful, isolated, and unsure where to turn. Having a direct line staffed by people who understand LGBTIQ+ experiences means victim-survivors can reach out and get immediate, affirming support. This is not only about crisis response, but also about helping people rebuild safety, connection and dignity.”*
- *“These are not random crimes, they are targeted attacks on gay and bisexual men. It’s homophobia and it’s gender-based violence. We must respond, invest in prevention initiatives, and most importantly ensure people aren’t left to face it alone.”*

Quotes attributable to Simon Ruth, CEO of Thorne Harbour Health:

- *“We are seeing the worst violence against our communities in over 40 years. The violence is compounded by victim blaming, fear of reprisal and mistrust of authorities. We thank Switchboard for supporting our work and providing a safe space for victims of hate crimes to seek support and advice.”*
- *“This helpline is a vital community-led support for victims, but it cannot be the only response. While our communities and services will always step up, we need a coordinated, whole-of-government response to address the culture of homophobia and online radicalisation driving these attacks.”*

Quotes attributable to Starlady, Director of Zoe Belle Gender Collective:

- *“In the global backlash against gender equity LGBTIQ+ communities are being increasingly vilified. This has resulted in escalating levels of the violence from men using homophobia and transphobia to socially bond and reassert dominant forms of masculinity. Our government, services and community urgently need to develop and implement a co-ordinated response to prevent further violence against LGBTIQ+ communities and to support the victims of this violence.”*
- *“The trans community have been fiercely advocating for a co-ordinated and funded response to the escalating levels of transphobia in our communities. We stand in solidarity with gay and bisexual men who are also being increasingly targeted in violent attacks. Sadly, homophobia and transphobia are being increasingly used as a way for young men to socially bond and reassert dominant forms of masculinity. Our community is stronger when we stand together in responding to gendered violence.”*

END