



8 May 2026

Via email: antilgbtqiahatecrimes@parliament.vic.gov.au

To whom it may concern,

Re: Inquiry into anti-LGBTIQA+ hate crimes in Victoria

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission to the inquiry into anti-LGBTIQA+ hate crimes in Victoria. The Victorian Pride Lobby is a community based advocacy group that represents lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer, and same-gender attracted Victorians. Our Rainbow Local Government campaign aims to recruit and support LGBTIQA+ candidates and allies to increase diversity and champion change on LGBTIQA+ issues in local government.

Local councils can play a frontline role in preventing and responding to hate-motivated harm, through policy development and delivery. As the level of government closest to the community, Victorian councils have led the way in the development of LGBTIQA+ action plans to protect and advance the safety of their local communities. However, councils across the state are increasingly subjected to coordinated online hate, misinformation and disinformation, and intimidation of Councillors and officers that is being mobilised by anti-LGBTIQA+ influencers and hate groups. These coordinated hate campaigns and associated threatening behaviours have directly impacted councils' ability to safely deliver LGBTIQA+ programs and events and have undermined further action to advance LGBTIQA+-inclusive policies and programs.

Our submission addresses, first, the targeting of council meetings, buildings, events, officers, and Councillors, and the impact that this is having on councils' ability to support their local LGBTIQA+ communities. In spite of these targeted attacks, councils across the state are continuing to show support. Our submission addresses, second, the development of LGBTIQA+ action plans by local councils, tackling community safety. These plans demonstrate the ways in which local councils can take action to protect their local LGBTIQA+ communities from hate crimes and other forms of prejudice-motivated violence.

We urge the Committee to consider local government, including Councillors and officers, and the role it can play in developing and delivering a coordinated, prevention-focused response to anti-LGBTIQA+ hate crimes that ensures that LGBTIQA+ communities across the state can participate safely and fully in civic life without fear of harm. An effective response to anti-LGBTIQA+ hate crimes requires action from all levels of government: Commonwealth, state, and local.

Targeting of Council meetings, buildings, events, officers, and Councillors

On 18 March 2023, British campaigner Kellie-Jay Keen-Minshull (also known as Posie Parker) held an anti-trans rally in Melbourne. Speeches by the event's organisers and its invited speakers compared being transgender to child grooming, described trans women as sexual predators and pedophiles, and described gender affirmation healthcare as mutilation. This rally was also attended by members of Melbourne's far right, who gave Nazi salutes to counter-protestors and who publicly announced their presence as protectors and allies of the rally. One speaker heavily criticised the **City of Ballarat** for including transgender people in its LGBTQIA+ inclusion plan.¹

The rally led to a cavalcade of abuse against at LGBTQIA+ communities across the state.

In March 2023, **City of Casey** cancelled a drag workshop after threats from far-right and self-proclaimed "Christian" groups, including a barrage of threatening calls and emails, as well as an altercation wherein a group barged into a Council meeting and flung homophobic and transphobic comments through the room.² The cancellation followed a 2022 *Exploring Safety in Casey* report, which found concerns about LGBTQIA+ unsafe spaces in the City, with community members raising issues with not having acceptance, concern for LGBTQIA+ friends, lack of visibility and exposure to the queer community, homophobic attention, and Council members being openly homophobic.³

In early April 2023, footpaths across the **City of Ballarat** were targeted with graffiti spouting anti-transgender rhetoric, including outside the Council offices.⁴ Cr Des Hudson condemned the graffiti and said "the City of Ballarat extends its unwavering support to all members of the trans and gender-diverse communities." The City also provided funding to Not In My Ballarat, a collaboration between community groups and Snap Send Solve for reporting harassment, discrimination, and vilification in the City. Whilst the graffiti was offensive, it would not fall afoul of provisions in the *Graffiti Prevention Act 2007* because it was marked with chalk and could thus be readily removed by wiping it with a dry cloth.⁵

On 26 April 2023, protestors derailed a **Monash City Council** meeting over a planned drag story time event by hurling abuse at the Councillors and community members in the public gallery.⁶ Fringe groups, including My Place, rallied supporters to attend. In May,

¹ Laura Mayers, 'Anti-transgender chalk graffiti across Ballarat does not reflect wider community, advocates say', *ABC News* (6 April 2023).

² Brandon Bentley, 'City of Casey cancels drag event after far-right threats', *Star Observer* (5 April 2023); Eleanor Wilson, "'Vile" threats cancel event', *Star Journal* (30 March 2023).

³ City of Casey, *Exploring Safety in Casey: Stage 2 Community Events Engagement Summary Report* (2022).

⁴ Laura Mayers, 'Anti-transgender chalk graffiti across Ballarat does not reflect wider community, advocates say', *ABC News* (6 April 2023).

⁵ *Graffiti Prevention Act 2007* s 3 - definition of 'mark graffiti' - and s 6.

⁶ Allanah Sciberras, 'Protestors derail Melbourne council meeting over drag storytime event', *9 News* (27 April 2023).

Council cancelled the event after threats of violence escalated to include intimidation from neo-Nazis.⁷ Thomas Sewell - who leads Australia's largest neo-Nazi group, the National Socialist Network - wrote in a since-deleted Telegram post that he would "bring as many Nazis as possible" to the event. In March 2024, Council announced their support for anti-vilification law reform.⁸ We are continuing to call on Council to take action under their local laws and the *Summary Offences Act 1966*, which empowers council officers to charge summary offences,⁹ to protect the community from vilification.

On 9 May 2023, at a **Hobsons Bay City Council** meeting that was considering a public toilet strategy, a petition against gender-neutral toilets organised by a group called Council Watch was tabled.¹⁰ The group's President, Dean Hurlston, said "I was not sporting something that was anti-trans" and "the trans community is welcome to use whatever facility they identify with and that is not negotiable." However, at the Council meeting, a woman was reportedly abused with sexist remarks, including being told to "bend over", and protestors shouted anti-COVID 19 vaccine slogans into a megaphone outside. A Facebook post Cr Daria Kellander made about security measures in the lead-up to the meeting attracted threatening messages towards councillors, including a message from one man that "if councillors and politicians need protection from the people there is only one way that is going to end", which a woman responded to that with a picture of a guillotine.

In May 2023, **Boroondara Council** cancelled a rainbow storytime singalong at Hawthorn Library on the basis that they could not create a safe environment for attendees.¹¹ Council made this decision after monitoring similar events across Victoria which had been threatened by intrusions of anti-social behaviour and holding fear of harm to event attendees and employees.¹²

Also in May 2023, a storytime at Eltham Library in **Nilumbik Shire** was targeted by fascists pushing for the event to be shut down, including through hateful emails and phone calls to library staff and social media posts online.¹³ In this case, one person made a complaint about the event to WorkSafe, whose inspectors attended the site but did little to address the issues of staff safety, instead framing the event itself as a workplace safety

⁷ Sophie Aubrey, "Disappointing": Monash Council cancels drag queen story time event', *The Age* (4 May 2023).

⁸ Rainbow Local Government. 'Monash Council on anti-vilification laws' <<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=945789176956728>>.

⁹ *Summary Offences Act 1966* s 56(1).

¹⁰ Elise Kinsella, 'Hobsons Bay City Council's public toilet strategy sparks divisive petition, charged meeting', *ABC News* (11 May 2023).

¹¹ Cait Kelly, 'Councils call off drag storytime and LGBTQ+ events after far-right threats', *The Guardian* (13 May 2023).

¹² Jewel Topsfield, "Incredibly disappointed": Drag queen story time event moved online after threats', *The Age* (15 May 2023).

¹³ Cait Kelly, 'Councils call off drag storytime and LGBTQ+ events after far-right threats', *The Guardian* (13 May 2023); Jewel Topsfield, "Incredibly disappointed": Drag queen story time event moved online after threats', *The Age* (15 May 2023).

risk for staff despite staff health and safety representatives supporting the event to go ahead. In response to these threats, community members set up Rainbow Community Angels, a group to disrupt and block out anti-queer protestors by wearing huge angel wings. An online meeting of the group was disrupted by two neo-Nazis who wrote homophobic abuse and “Heil Hitler” in the comments section of the Zoom chat. Despite Council being determined for the event to go ahead, it had to be moved online because of the threats.

At the 20 June 2023 **Brimbank City Council** meeting, as Councillors considered the draft Brimbank LGBTQIA+ Action Plan, residents shouted words of “grooming”, “evil”, and “paedophiles” across the chamber.¹⁴ Security was called for and police were present at the next Council meeting as a “precautionary measure” to ensure the safety of everyone attending council meetings. Despite this abuse, in November 2023, Council adopted the *LGBTQIA+ Action Plan 2024-2028*,¹⁵ which includes a commitment to strengthen relationships with community services, organisations, and government departments to promote and create a more inclusive and safer Brimbank community for LGBTQIA+ people and allies. We discuss the importance of LGBTQIA+ action plans further below.

In June 2023, the **Rural City of Wangaratta** decided to delay the Rainbow Ball, a regional celebration of the LGBTQIA+ community, for the safety of participants, due to the event being targeted by groups with radical views.¹⁶ This followed police providing information to the City to inform their risk assessment.¹⁷ As far as we are aware, the event still has not been rescheduled

In November 2023, a drag storytime event at Shepparton Library was cancelled by **Greater Shepparton City Council** due to police intelligence raising safety risk concerns and a protest that led to the library locking its doors and police being called to the scene.¹⁸ Despite cancelling the indoor event, the library staff and Rainbow Community Angels successfully held the event outside the library premises.¹⁹

In August 2024, the Victorian Government launched the Rainbow Libraries Toolkit to support libraries across the state to provide more inclusive spaces for Victoria’s LGBTQIA+ communities following the targeting of LGBTQIA+ events, including drag story

¹⁴ Hannah Hamoud, ‘Safety concerns for council meetings’, *Star Weekly* (21 July 2023).

¹⁵ Brimbank City Council, *LGBTQIA+ Action Plan 2024-2028*.

¹⁶ Erin Somerville and Anna Chisholm, ‘Wangaratta’s Rainbow Ball delayed amid safety concerns for participants targeted by radical groups’, *ABC News* (2 June 2023).

¹⁷ ‘Rainbow Ball postponed due to negative commentary on social media’, *Wangaratta Chronicle* (1 June 2023).

¹⁸ Callum Marshall and Bransen Gibson, ‘Pop-up drag queen story time held in Shepparton after official event cancelled’, *ABC News* (16 November 2023).

¹⁹ Justin Cooper, ‘Drag storytime perseveres despite threats from anti-LGBT groups’, *Star Observer* (17 November 2023).

time events, held at libraries.²⁰ The launch of the Toolkit led to unanticipated backlash from sectors of the community who spread misinformation about the Toolkit in the media; however, this raised awareness among rainbow families of the Toolkit and that rainbow families are welcome in public libraries.

In February 2025, Cr Ella Svensson submitted a notice of motion to **Merri-bek City Council** to paint progressive pride flags on Council's local roads. Following this, the Council Watch group labelled her a "woke lesbo", which prompted a wave of anti-LGBTIQA+ hatred in their comments section including comments directed at Cr Svensson and LGBTIQA+ people more generally. Cr Svensson told the *Star Observer* that, as a result of this post, she "copped a barrage of awful homophobic abuse."²¹ This is consistent with research that shows that queer politicians experience more personal harassment online.²²

Also in February 2025, demonstrators at a rally in Ballarat's CBD against the Queensland Government's ban on puberty blockers were intimidated by a man dressed in all-black carrying transphobic fliers and posters featuring a Nazi hate symbol and calling trans people "subhuman freaks" and claiming that "the Ballarat council has failed us".²³ The man followed the group and had a verbal confrontation with one of its members. The **City of Ballarat** encouraged community members to report the posters through Not In My Ballarat, with Mayor Tracey Hargreaves labelling them "divisive".

In June 2025, a floral pride flag in the Ballarat CBD, created as part of the City's Pride Month celebrations, was vandalised.²⁴ **City of Ballarat** Mayor Tracey Hargreaves condemned the vandalism, describing it as a "malicious act", and encouraging people with information to report it to the police. This incident follows numerous cases of vandalism of pride flags and LGBTQ+ sites internationally.²⁵

In July 2025, two prominent queer venues in Abbotsford were targeted with homophobic graffiti.²⁶ One of the venues had the word "fag" sprayed across its doors, while the wall

²⁰ Victorian Government, 'Rainbow libraries toolkit launches on Wear It Purple Day' <<https://www.premier.vic.gov.au/rainbow-libraries-toolkit-launches-wear-it-purple-day>>.

²¹ Chloe Sargeant, 'Councillor to bring motion for sparkling new rainbow crossings in Melbourne's Merri-bek area', *Star Observer* (7 February 2025).

²² Elise Stephenson et al, "Risky visibility": The online harassment of queer politicians' (forthcoming) *European Journal of Politics and Gender*, Blair Williams et al, 'Out online: An analysis of tweets posted to LGBTIQA+ Australian politicians during the 2022 federal election' (forthcoming) *Australian Journal of Political Science*.

²³ Alex Dalziel, "Appalling": Transphobic flyers distributed around Ballarat CBD', *The Courier* (14 February 2025).

²⁴ Chloe Sargeant, "Malicious": Ballarat's beloved floral pride flag vandalised during Pride Month celebrations', *Star Observer* (24 June 2025).

²⁵ Daniel Villarreal, 'Police hunt "malicious" vandal who destroyed city's rainbow Pride flowerbed display', *LGBTQ Nation* (24 June 2025).'

²⁶ Lydia Jupp, 'Police release photos of people suspected of homophobic Laird vandalism', *Star Observer* (5 November 2025).

was covered with a stencil of Ned Kelly that read “Ned Hates Fags”.²⁷ **City of Yarra’s** graffiti removal team was swiftly on the case. The Council suspects the graffiti vandalism was undertaken by neo-Nazis, with Mayor Stephen Jolly labelling the vandalism as “disgusting, horrific”.²⁸

The impact of this coordinated targeting of Council meetings, buildings, and events cannot be underestimated. As the Municipal Association of Victoria notes in its submission, “many councils are now adopting highly cautious approaches when planning or delivering specific public initiatives”, including “running exclusive targeted invitation only events” instead of publicly-advertised and -accessible events and, sadly “in some cases, councils have opted not to run these events at all.” In some cases this is not only a safety decision, but a financial decision; the cost of running events has increased due to the need for more security measures. Similarly, the impact of actions by anti-LGBTIQA+ commentators and hate groups targeting Councillors and council officers is significant and deeply harmful, as these actions threaten the very safety of local representatives and staff.

The local government sector has responded. In October 2025, the **Municipal Association of Victoria** passed a resolution, moved by the **City of Yarra**, committing to working with local councils to ensure the safety and inclusion of all Victorians regardless of their sex, gender identity, or sexual orientation and calling on the Victorian Parliament to implement a positive duty for organisations to take reasonable and proportionate steps to prevent vilification, as is currently the case for discrimination, sexual harassment and victimisation matters under the *Equal Opportunity Act 2010*. We echo this call in our recommendations below.

Furthermore, in May 2024, the **Municipal Association of Victoria** passed a resolution, moved by **City of Darebin** and **City of Yarra**, to host a series of forums open to all councils to discuss and share strategies for LGBTIQA+ inclusion and allow for cross-sharing of expertise and capacity-building about risk management and LGBTIQA+ inclusion in the face of threats to safety. We are working with the Municipal Association of Victoria to advance this resolution.

²⁷ Graeme Watson, ‘Melbourne’s The Laird and Eagle Leather targeted with homophobic graffiti’, *Out in Perth* (7 July 2025).

²⁸ Yarra City Council, ‘Homophobia has no place in Yarra City’ <<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=1136266061864887>>; Rachael Dexter, ‘Rainbow flags cover up messages of hate after attacks in Melbourne’s gay heartland’, *The Age* (18 July 2025).

Recommendation 1: The Minister for Local Government should issue a new Ministerial Statement for Local Government encouraging councils to develop and adopt community safety strategies.

Recommendation 2: The Victorian Government, through Local Government Victoria, should establish dedicated funding streams and resources for councils to implement evidence-based community safety initiatives that promote social cohesion and inclusivity, which may include infrastructure improvements (e.g. improved lighting, clear and effective signage, graffiti removal, safer pedestrian routes), delivery of events, community engagement programs, programs to support vulnerable groups, and antidiscrimination measures enhancing local law units.

Recommendation 3: Local Government Victoria should partner with peak bodies and Victoria Police to provide training to local laws officers on protecting LGBTIQ+ communities from vilification and hate crimes under local laws and the *Summary Offences Act 1966*

Recommendation 4: The Victorian Government should introduce legislation to impose an enforceable positive duty to eliminate vilification in section 15 of the *Equal Opportunity Act 2010* to require duty-holders to take reasonable and proportionate measures to eliminate vilification before it turns into violence

Recommendation 5: The Minister for Local Government should reinstate the positive duty for Councillors to eliminate discrimination, sexual harassment, and victimisation in schedule 1 of the Local Government (Governance and Integrity) Regulations 2020 that was removed in the Local Government (Governance and Integrity) Amendment Regulations 2025, in addition to a positive duty to eliminate vilification

Recommendation 6: Local Government Victoria should partner with peak bodies to develop professional development training for Councillors on LGBTIQ+ awareness and inclusion

Recommendation 7: Local Government Victoria should facilitate the distribution of the Rainbow Libraries Toolkit to all public libraries

Recommendation 8: Local Government Victoria should work with peak bodies and organisations like Rainbow Local Government to create resources on how to establish and LGBTIQ+ advisory committees and develop LGBTIQ+ action plans specific to their municipalities

Recommendation 9: The Victorian Government should expand the Pride Events and Festivals Fund to allow funding for new artistic works and other creative efforts that promote LGBTIQ+ visibility

Recommendation 10: The Department of Justice and Community Safety should provide grants, through its Community Crime Prevention Initiative, to deliver public art projects to prevent vandalism and promote LGBTIQ+ visibility



Recommendation 11: Victoria Police should work with local councils to develop Local Safety Committees

Recommendation 12: Snap Send Solve should include tools for reporting harassment, discrimination, and vilification in its standard offering to local councils

Development of LGBTIQ+ action plans, tackling community safety

Various councils across the state have developed and adopted LGBTIQ+ action plans.²⁹

In 2019, **Mount Alexander Shire Council** supported the development of the *Let's Go Proud! Strategic Plan 2019*.³⁰ This followed fallout over the Council's decision not to fly the rainbow flag,³¹ since reversed. Noting that the Plan is now nearly a decade old, we are working with Council and its LGBTIQ+ Steering Group in the hope to review and renew the Plan, with a particular focus on ensuring LGBTIQ+ community safety.

In August 2022, **Greater Shepparton City Council** adopted its *LGBTIQ+ Advisory Committee Action Plan 2022-2025*.³² The Plan will be reviewed every three years. Noting this, we will advocate to Council for the review and renewal of the Plan. Already, the Plan has contributed to the installation of rainbow public artwork and the raising of a permanent rainbow flag.³³

In October 2022, **City of Ballarat** adopted its *LGBTIQ+ Inclusion Plan 2022-2026*.³⁴ It incorporates several actions relevant to LGBTIQ+ safety, including publicising a statement of commitment across a range of settings, monitoring and responding promptly to any LGBTIQ+ discrimination on Council's social media, and removing discriminatory graffiti promptly. The City has also developed guidance and resources on putting on LGBTIQ+ events safely,³⁵ and supported Respect Ballarat, a community model to prevent gendered violence in the City launched in September 2025.³⁶ The model was

²⁹ Brimbank City Council, *LGBTQIA+ Action Plan 2024-2028*; City of Casey, *Rainbow Action Plan 2024-2028*; City of Darebin, *LGBTIQ+ Action Plan 2026-30*; Maribyrnong City Council, *LGBTIQ+ Strategy and Action Plan 2022-2026*; City of Monash, *LGBTIQ+ Action Plan 2023-2027*; Merri-bek City Council, *LGBTIQ+ Action Plan 2023-2026*; City of Port Phillip, *LGBTIQ+ Action Plan 2023-26*; City of Stonnington, *LGBTIQ+ Action Plan 2023-26*; City of Yarra, *Rainbow Yarra Policy*; City of Ballarat, *LGBTIQ+ Inclusion Plan 2022-2026*; City of Greater Bendigo, *LGBTIQ+ Inclusion Action Plan 2023-2025*; City of Greater Geelong, *Rainbow Action Plan 2025-29*; Hepburn Shire Council, *Rainbow Action Plan for LGBTIQ+ Inclusion 2024-2026*; Mildura City Council, *GLBTIQ Inclusion Plan 2016*; Mount Alexander Shire Council, *Let's Go Proud! Strategic Plan 2019*; Greater Shepparton City Council, *LGBTIQ+ Advisory Committee Action Plan 2022-2025*.

³⁰ Mount Alexander Shire Council, *Let's Go Proud! Strategic Plan 2019*

<<https://www.readkong.com/page/strategic-plan-2019-january-2018-7479932>>.

³¹ Stephanie Corsetti, 'Fallout over decision not to fly rainbow flag continues for Mount Alexander Shire Council', *ABC News* (18 October 2017).

³² Greater Shepparton City Council, *LGBTIQ+ Advisory Committee Action Plan 2022-2025*; Anna McGuinness, "'Empowering": Greater Shepparton LGBTIQ+ action plan adopted', *Dairy News Australia* (18 August 2022).

³³ 'Advisory committee champions LGBTQIA+ inclusion', *The Advisor* (13 August 2025).

³⁴ City of Ballarat, *LGBTIQ+ Inclusion Plan 2022-2026*; Malvika Hemanth, 'City of Ballarat has adopted its first LGBTIQ+ Inclusion Plan 2022-2026', *The Courier* (27 October 2022).

³⁵ Ballarat Pride, 'Putting on LGBTIQ+ events safely'

<<https://ballaratpride.au/lgbtiqa%2B-events-safety>>.

³⁶ Brianna Boecker, 'First-of-its-kind community model launches in Ballarat to prevent gendered violence', *Women's Agenda* (18 September 2025)

informed by consultation with LGBTIQ+ community members in Ballarat.³⁷ That consultation heard experiences of homophobia and transphobia in public places, in workplaces, in services, and in schools. Participants indicated they appreciated visual signals that tell them where they are likely to feel safe, like when local businesses and services put rainbow or trans flags or stickers in their windows.

In December 2022, **Maribyrnong City Council** launched its *LGBTIQ+ Strategy and Action Plan 2022-2026*.³⁸ The Plan incorporates several actions relevant to LGBTIQ+ safety, including establishing a standing agenda item of the Maribyrnong Community Safety Committee to co-design and advocate for community safety initiatives to prevent and respond to LGBTIQ+ experiences of violence and crime, raising awareness of LGBTIQ+ public safety and integrating gender safety principles in the design of public spaces and streets, and advocating for improved responses to LGBTIQ+ intimate partner violence and other forms of gender-based violence. On 18 April 2026, Maribyrnong City Council invited LGBTIQ+ community members to share their experience and perspectives, discuss challenges, and identify opportunities to improve safety and wellbeing in the municipality in a facilitated workshop.³⁹ Insights from the workshop will contribute to the development of a public report, *Rainbow Maribyrnong*, helping inform future Council initiatives and partnerships.

In March 2023, **City of Monash** launched its *LGBTIQ+ Action Plan 2023-2027*.⁴⁰ The Plan incorporates several actions relevant to LGBTIQ+ safety, including leading programs and initiatives that improve perception and actual safety of LGBTIQ+ residents, incorporating an 'equality clause' in procurement policies and processes to ensure that contracting companies and external agencies do not discriminate against LGBTIQ+ people, and identifying risks to safety of LGBTIQ+ people in risk management processes.

City of Stonington engaged with LGBTIQ+ community members to understand the current and emerging needs, changing issues, expectations, and priorities within the community. From the consultations, it emerged that issues of community safety and amenity were a challenge, discrimination and violence against LGBTIQ+ people persisted, and there was a need for more safe and welcoming physical spaces and social infrastructure. In response, the City's *LGBTIQ+ Action Plan 2023-26*,⁴¹ endorsed in May 2023, and *Community Safety Plan 2024-2027*⁴² contain several actions that relate to community safety, including developing Safer Design Guidelines and training that

³⁷ Respect Victoria, 'Respect Ballarat: What have we learned?'
<<https://www.respectvictoria.vic.gov.au/respect-ballarat/what-we-have-learned>>.

³⁸ Maribyrnong City Council, *LGBTIQ+ Strategy and Action Plan 2022-2026*.

³⁹ Maribyrnong City Council, 'LGBTIQ+ Community Safety Workshop'
<<https://www.maribyrnong.vic.gov.au/Events/LGBTIQ-Community-Safety-Workshop>>.

⁴⁰ City of Monash, *LGBTIQ+ Action Plan 2023-2027*.

⁴¹ City of Stonington, *LGBTIQ+ Action Plan 2023-26*.

⁴² City of Stonington, *Community Safety Plan 2024-2027*.

highlight vulnerability of LGBTIQ+ groups, supporting measures to improve safety for LGBTIQ+ people, inviting Police to attend Council's LGBTIQ+ advisory committee annually to discuss safety concerns and identify opportunities to improve communication and reporting.

Also in May 2023, **Merri-bek City Council** adopted its *LGBTIQ+ Action Plan 2023-2026*.⁴³ The Plan incorporates an overarching principle that "Merri-bek is an inclusive city, where we as LGBTIQ+ communities are visible, safe and celebrated." Council is also in the process of drafting a Libraries LGBTIQ+ Action Plan focussing on LGBTIQ+ inclusion and safety in its libraries.⁴⁴

Similarly, **City of Port Phillip's** *LGBTIQ+ Action Plan 2023-26*,⁴⁵ adopted in July 2023, and *Community Safety Plan 2025-29*⁴⁶ contain several actions that relate to community safety, including embedding the assessment of risks to the inclusion and safety of LGBTIQ+ communities into Council's Risk Management Framework, providing gender-affirming facilities such as all-gender bathroom and changeroom options in Council facilities, and publicly responding to incidents of discrimination and taking preventative steps to enhance safety.

In November 2023, **City of Greater Bendigo** adopted its *LGBTIQ+ Inclusion Action Plan 2023-2025*.⁴⁷ The Plan incorporates several actions relevant to LGBTIQ+ safety, including scoping and embedding LGBTIQ+ inclusive practice within the City's emergency relief centres, responding to anti-LGBTIQ+ social media postings to reduce harm to LGBTIQ+ community, and enforcing the Community Local Law to protect LGBTIQ+ community members in a public place from threatening or abusive words or behaviour which interfere with their use or enjoyment of that public place.

In July 2024, **Hepburn Shire Council** adopted its *Rainbow Action Plan for LGBTIQ+ Inclusion 2024-2026*.⁴⁸ The Plan incorporates several actions to identify and minimise potential risks to the safety of LGBTIQ+ group members, including consulting with LGBTIQ+ groups to understand current concerns around community safety, identifying emerging risks to LGBTIQ+ people in the Shire and working with local police and other services to mitigate those risks, and developing risk management plans for Council's LGBTIQ+ public programs and activities to address the safety of all participants.

⁴³ Merri-bek City Council, *LGBTIQ+ Action Plan 2023-2026*.

⁴⁴ Merri-bek City Council, 'Merri-bek Libraries LGBTIQ+ Action Plan' <<https://conversations.merri-bek.vic.gov.au/libraries-lgbtiqa-plan>>.

⁴⁵ City of Port Phillip, *LGBTIQ+ Action Plan 2023-26*.

⁴⁶ City of Port Phillip, *Community Safety Plan 2025-29*.

⁴⁷ City of Greater Bendigo, *LGBTIQ+ Inclusion Action Plan 2023-2025*.

⁴⁸ Hepburn Shire Council, *Rainbow Action Plan for LGBTIQ+ Inclusion 2024-2026*; Dean Arcuri, 'Hepburn Shire Council launches rainbow action plan', *QNews* (28 August 2024).

In January 2016, **Mildura Rural City Council** adopted its *GLBTIQ Inclusion Plan 2016*.⁴⁹ The Plan includes a rainbow sticker campaign to support and recognise local businesses and shops that are supportive and welcoming of GLBTIQ people and are safe places for GLBTIQ people. In June 2025, Council resolved to develop and implement a Rainbow Ready Action Plan.⁵⁰ This action is also incorporated in the *Council Plan 2025-2029*.⁵¹ Noting that the old Plan is now over a decade old, we are continuing to work with the Council to progress development of the new Rainbow Ready Action Plan.

In August 2025, **City of Greater Geelong** unanimously backed its *Rainbow Action Plan 2025-29*.⁵² The Plan has several safety-related actions, including developing a clear and coordinated framework to respond to LGBTQIA+-phobic commentary and coverage in media and online platforms, and exploring implementation of all-gender facilities in all new builds and upgrades.

In June 2024, following community members recommending actions to create safe spaces for LGBTQIA+ community, **City of Casey** endorsed its *Rainbow Action Plan 2024-2028*,⁵³ which includes developing an all-gender bathroom and changeroom options design guide to provide inclusive spaces for LGBTQIA+ community members, developing a language and image guide to ensure inclusive and accessible communication and promotion of Council programs and events, and developing a program for risk assessments for LGBTQIA+ events across Council.

In November 2025, **City of Yarra** adopted its *Rainbow Yarra Policy*.⁵⁴ The Policy incorporates several actions relevant to LGBTQIA+ safety, including collaborating with local organisations to prevent discrimination and violence and ensure safety and support, addressing anti-LGBTQIA+ discrimination with tailored campaigns aimed at shifting attitudes across the wider community, and helping foster a community culture that rejects discrimination and promotes respect in community spaces and programs.

In March 2026, **City of Darebin** adopted its *LGBTQIA+ Action Plan 2026-30*.⁵⁵ The Plan commits Council to proactively respond to and stand up against instances of anti-LGBT hate speech and misinformation, lead and contribute to community-led advocacy efforts and campaigns on key issues relating to safety and discrimination, and support and deliver initiatives to improve safety and reduce prejudice against LGBTQIA+ people and

⁴⁹ Mildura City Council, *GLBTIQ Inclusion Plan 2016*; 'Mildura Council to adopt gay, lesbian social inclusion plan', *ABC News* (29 January 2016).

⁵⁰ For background, see 'MRCC working on a Rainbow Ready Roadmap', *River 1467AM* (20 June 2023).

⁵¹ Mildura Rural City Council, *Council Plan 2025-2029*.

⁵² City of Greater Geelong, *Rainbow Action Plan 2025-29*; Luke Griffiths, 'Geelong council passes LGBTQIA+ action plan following unisex toilet tension', *Geelong Advertiser* (27 August 2025).

⁵³ City of Casey, *Rainbow Action Plan 2024-2028*; 'Casey's rainbow action plan', *Star News* (17 July 2024).

⁵⁴ City of Yarra, *Rainbow Yarra Policy*.

⁵⁵ City of Darebin, *LGBTQIA+ Action Plan 2026-30*.

families. This follows, in May 2025, Council unanimously agreeing to prohibit indecent, insulting, racist, offensive, or abusive language on a road or Council land, buildings, or facilities.⁵⁶

Some common actions across the various LGBTIQA+ action plans include:

- Conducting cultural safety risk analyses via **Rainbow Tick** self-assessments.⁵⁷
- Ensuring the safety of LGBTIQA+ children and young people through incorporating them in **Child Safe Standard** policies and procedures,⁵⁸ in line with new compliance requirements.
- Affirming the **Darlington Statement** for the rights of intersex people.⁵⁹
- Maintaining and building stakeholder relationships with **Victoria Police LGBTIQ+ Liaison Officers** for consultation on community safety events and information and cross-sharing information on safety incidents in the community.⁶⁰
- Inviting and including LGBTIQA+ communities in activities for **Community Safety Month**.⁶¹
- Promoting the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission's **Community Reporting Tool** for discrimination and breaches of human rights on the council's web page.⁶²
- Supporting and facilitating community infrastructure and planning to create inclusive and safe spaces.
- Supporting **local community groups** and organisations and businesses to provide safe and inclusive spaces for LGBTIQA+ people and families and address discriminatory behaviours.
- Identifying and implementing opportunities to provide LGBTIQA+ awareness **training** to staff and Councillors.⁶³
- Increasing visibility of Council's support for LGBTIQA+ people and families through rainbow **signage** and communications content.⁶⁴
- Supporting the council's **Youth Services** team to increase LGBTIQA+ inclusion and safety and maintain relationships with school Pride groups and committees within the municipality.⁶⁵

⁵⁶ City of Darebin, *Community Amenity Local Law 2025* cl 36(1)(c),(d).

⁵⁷ Brimbank, Port Phillip, Greater Bendigo, Casey, Darebin, Monash, Ballarat.

⁵⁸ Brimbank, Monash, Maribyrnong.

⁵⁹ Maribyrnong, Stonnington, Casey, Merri-bek.

⁶⁰ Monash, Casey, Ballarat, Maribyrnong, Hepburn.

⁶¹ Monash, Casey.

⁶² Greater Bendigo, Hepburn.

⁶³ Darebin, Stonnington, Ballarat, Brimbank, Casey, Maribyrnong, Monash, Merri-bek, Port Phillip, Greater Bendigo, Greater Geelong, Hepburn, Mount Alexander.

⁶⁴ Casey, Stonnington, Brimbank, Monash, Ballarat, Greater Bendigo, Greater Geelong, Mount Alexander.

⁶⁵ Casey, Stonnington, Darebin, Monash, Merri-bek, Port Phillip, Yarra, Greater Bendigo, Greater Geelong, Mount Alexander.

- Reviewing the council's Public Toilet Strategy to ensure appropriate provision of facilities for all genders in new and redeveloped council infrastructure.⁶⁶
- Advocating for safe and affirming healthcare for trans and gender diverse communities.⁶⁷

Recommendation 13: The Victorian Safe Communities Network should collaborate with LGBTIQ+ organisations and the Municipal Association of Victoria's Community Safety Advisory Panel to develop resources on LGBTIQ+ community safety

Recommendation 14: The Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission should promote their Community Reporting Tool to local councils

Recommendation 15: The Commissioner for Children and Young People should develop guidance materials and resources on implementing Child Safe Standard 5, specifically in relation to LGBTIQ+ children and young people, and make these resources available to councils' youth services teams

Recommendation 16: The Department of Education should develop resources to tackle anti-LGBTIQ+ prejudice and ideology within school settings and make these resources available to council's youth services teams

Recommendation 17: Victoria Police should set a target of having an LGBTIQ+ Liaison Officer at all regularly-manned police stations

Recommendation 18: Victoria Police should develop guidance for officers on the criminal provisions of the *Health Safeguards for People Born with Variations in Sex Characteristics Act 2026*, in consultation with intersex people and organisations

Recommendation 19: The Minister for Housing and Building should adopt the provisions on all-gender sanitary facilities in the National Construction Code 2025

Recommendation 20: The Victorian Government should continue their support for safe and affirming healthcare for trans and gender diverse people

We thank you for the opportunity to make this submission and would welcome the opportunity to give further evidence at a public hearing.

Yours sincerely,

Sean Mulcahy, Jan Farrell, and Chelsea Ayling

Victorian Pride Lobby - Rainbow Local Government campaign

⁶⁶ Ballarat, Greater Bendigo, Darebin, Maribyrnong, Monash, Merri-bek, Stonnington, Hepburn.

⁶⁷ Yarra.