

T R A N S C R I P T

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL LEGAL AND SOCIAL ISSUES COMMITTEE

Inquiry into Anti-LGBTIQA+ Hate Crimes in Victoria

Melbourne – Wednesday 24 June 2026

MEMBERS

Joe McCracken – Chair

Michael Galea – Deputy Chair

Ryan Batchelor

Anasina Gray-Barberio

Renee Heath

Ann-Marie Hermans

Rachel Payne

Lee Tarlamis

WITNESS

Professor Adam Bourne, Director, Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society, La Trobe University.

The CHAIR: Good morning, and welcome to the next session of the Legal and Social Issues Committee inquiry into anti-LGBTIQA+ hate crimes. I am Joe McCracken, Chair of the inquiry, and we will go through and introduce our committee members. I will go to my left, my right and online.

Ann-Marie HERMANS: Hi. I am Ann-Marie Hermans, Member for South-Eastern Metro.

Aiv PUGLIELLI: Aiv Puglielli, Member for North-Eastern Metro.

Michael GALEA: Michael Galea. Deputy Chair, Member for South-East Metro. I will acknowledge that we have worked together professionally in the past.

Ryan BATCHELOR: Ryan Batchelor, Member for Southern Metropolitan Region.

The CHAIR: And we have got a couple online as well. I will go to Anasina and then Sheena.

Anasina GRAY-BARBERIO: Good morning. Anasina Gray-Barberio, Northern Metro.

Sheena WATT: Hello. Sheena Watt, Northern Metropolitan Region.

The CHAIR: Thank you. All evidence taken is protected by parliamentary privilege as provided by the *Constitution Act 1975* and further subject to the provisions of the Legislative Council standing orders. Therefore information that you provide at this hearing is protected by law, but if you go elsewhere and say the same thing, you may not necessarily be protected by the privileges that exist in this room right now. Any deliberately false evidence or misleading of the committee may be considered a contempt of Parliament.

All evidence is being recorded. You will be provided with a proof version of the transcript, but ultimately it will be made public because it will be put on the committee's website.

Just for the Hansard record, are you able to say your name, your title and the organisation, if any, that you are appearing on behalf of, please.

Adam BOURNE: Sure. Thank you. I am Adam Bourne, I am the Director of the Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society at La Trobe University.

The CHAIR: Thank you, Adam, and welcome. I will hand over to you. The floor is yours. Thanks very much for coming along today.

Adam BOURNE: Thank you, Chair, and thank you to the committee for the invitation to appear this morning. As I said, I am Adam Bourne. I am Director of the centre for sex, health and society at La Trobe ARCSHS – the name of the centre – hosts the largest concentration of LGBTIQ research in Australia and is a trusted source of evidence relating to their health and social experiences. Our data is used by state, territory and Commonwealth governments to inform policy, decision-making and service development.

In my opening remarks I want to make four key points, and in doing so I am slightly zooming out from the specific evidence you heard about the current acute incidents that my colleagues from Thorne Harbour and Switchboard were talking about to describe a little more the broader context of hate experienced by LGBTIQ communities. My first point is that anti-LGBTIQ hate crime is not inevitable. It is indeed preventable. The incidents that Thorne Harbour and Switchboard spoke to a moment ago are not the actions of isolated individuals. They occur in social environments that continue to tolerate, excuse or actively produce violence against people whose sexuality, gender or bodies sit outside narrow social norms.

The recent attacks against gay and bisexual men, including the use of dating apps to lure and assault people, are serious and they demand a strong response, but they are only one expression of a broader pattern of LGBTIQA+ violence – a pattern that affects gay, bisexual and queer men; trans and gender-diverse people; lesbian, bisexual and queer women; asexual people; and intersex people.

My second point is that the data show that LGBTIQ violence is widespread. Our centre leads the largest survey of LGBTIQ+ adults in Australia, called Private Lives, which in 2019 heard from nearly 7000 people nationally and 2333 living here in Victoria. It was the largest survey of its kind at the time. Among that Victorian sample, more than a third reported verbal abuse in the previous 12 months because of their sexual orientation or gender identity; more than one in five received written threats of abuse via emails or on social media because of their gender identity or sexuality; also more than one in five reported harassment, such as being spat at or receiving offensive gestures; and 14 per cent, about one in seven, reported threats of physical violence, physical attack or assault. Each of these instances was in the last 12 months; these were not historic instances from the dim and distant past.

The Private Lives data also show important differences within LGBTIQ communities. Verbal abuse was more likely to be reported by trans and gender-diverse people, more so than cisgender people, but even among cisgender people it was still unacceptably high, at around about a third. The data I quoted are from 2019, and I want to acknowledge that that means they are a few years old now. But our centre is actually in the process of currently running the same survey again, with data collection closing in just one week's time. As of this morning, more than 9300 LGBTIQ adults have participated nationally, including more than 3500 here in Victoria. These data are still coming in and they need to be carefully examined, so I cannot quote specific statistics in this address. But I can tell you that as a general trend, with that massive sample that is already in place, nothing has gotten better, and in many instances things appear to have gotten worse, particularly in relation to online experiences of hate and harassment and in relation to experiences of physical violence.

My third point is that hate crime is not only a justice issue; it is also a public health and mental health issue. Hate crime does not only cause harm at the moment of an assault, threat or act of harassment; it affects people's sense of dignity, safety, belonging and participation in everyday life. The mental health burden carried by many LGBTIQ+ people is profound, with some of the highest rates of suicide among any part of the Australian population. I do not suggest that hate crime alone explains those outcomes. The causes are broader and they are cumulative. But there is a very clear pattern that exists: communities most exposed to violence and abuse are also carrying the heaviest burden of psychological distress and suicidality. The mental health impact is not incidental or secondary; it is one of the most central harms of a hate crime.

My fourth point is about violence. The violence visible in police data is only part of the picture. Anti-LGBTIQ+ violence is substantially under-reported to police. Some people fear being outed, some worry they will not be believed and some have prior experiences of courts or other institutions that were unsafe, dismissive or actively harmful. Others may not recognise what they experienced as hate motivated, where abuse has become so normalised for them over time. Reporting is not simply a matter of telling people to come forward – people come forward when they believe the system is safe, is competent and is capable of doing something useful with the information they provide.

This has three practical implications. First, we need to build LGBTIQ capability into police and reporting systems so that hate motivation is better recognised, recorded and responded to properly. Second, we need to fund trusted LGBTIQ community organisations to support people through reporting, counselling, legal support and victim support. Community organisations are often the bridge between victim-survivors and formal systems that they may not otherwise approach. And third, the law needs to name anti-LGBTIQ hate more clearly. Where an offence is motivated by or demonstrates hostility towards a person's protected attributes, that should be explicitly prohibited in legislation, sentencing and criminal records. This is not only about punishment, it is about recognition, accountability and this state sending a clear message that anti-LGBTIQ violence is not tolerated. A practical mechanism we recommend is a Victorian LGBTIQ hate crime prevention action plan that sits under the whole-of-government LGBTIQ strategy, *Pride in Our Future*. This needs to be properly resourced, with clear outcomes and indicators spanning prevention, early intervention, response and recovery.

In closing, Victoria already has much of the architecture for a better response: LGBTIQ+ expertise, prevention expertise, policy infrastructure and community-controlled services. One of the key things missing is coordination, investment and accountability. The question is whether Victoria will continue to respond to each outbreak of violence after it occurs or whether it will invest in changing the conditions that produce that violence in the first place. Thank you, Chair, and I look forward to your questions.

The CHAIR: Thank you very much. I will go first, and then we will go through the committee again. There is a lot in that.

Adam BOURNE: Yes.

The CHAIR: I guess the first part I want to talk about is the under-reporting. Obviously you would have heard the previous witnesses; they talked about that as well. You mentioned that under-reporting is partially due to a distrust in the system. What is it about the system that is distrusted?

Adam BOURNE: There are multiple components to that. There is an enduring concern of stigma or discrimination that might actively come from the police themselves, that the police themselves may hold homophobic or transphobic attitudes. The extent to which that is the case, I think, has, you know, drastically lessened over the years. But people still hold that fear or concern regardless. I think that is one dimension. I think a belief or a fear that they might not be believed or that it might not be taken seriously – ‘It is just someone calling you a faggot.’ ‘It is just someone attacking you in an online environment and saying hateful and hostile things.’ This has been so normal in our society for such a very, very long time that there is a sense of, ‘Well, what’s so extraordinary about that?’ Like, why does that necessitate a response or a reaction? I think that is one of the key things that holds many people from stepping forward to the police, a belief that it is just not going to be taken seriously.

The CHAIR: Okay. One of the things you also talked about was having these specific protected attribute hate crimes legislated as a specific offence. I guess, if I look at the actions of 13-year-olds, for example, or young people committing some pretty disgusting things online, hate is a very subjective thing, and it is really hard to sort of get to the bottom of what is hate as compared to is it someone’s stupidity or are they really immature? I am really interested to explore that. Where do you think the line is drawn there?

Adam BOURNE: That is a great question. I mean, the law always struggles to understand what is going on inside someone’s head, right? One of the challenges with legislation that speaks to whether a crime was motivated by hate is that it means that you are making assumptions around a person’s actions as opposed to what is going on inside their mind, and those are two very hard things to decipher. We are currently in a situation, though, where someone might, you know, physically, violently attack someone in the street while screaming vile homophobic or transphobic slurs at them and nothing about their verbal statements at that point in time has bearing upon things like their sentencing or on their criminal record. I think that is the thing that we are really trying to draw attention to here – that aggravated dimension is not recognised in our current legal system.

The CHAIR: Yes. I hate to see it anywhere, to be honest. Regardless of whatever motivates the hate towards any particular person, it is awful to see, and you would not wish it on your worst enemy. I guess there has been discussion about the online aspect and how people are lured into these situations with a false expectation of one thing and getting abused in another horrible way. What onus do you think rests on those that own the platforms to put in safeguards to prevent these sorts of incidents from happening?

Adam BOURNE: I think we are in a situation at the minute where there is very little oversight or regulation of these kinds of platforms. There is no requirement for them to have policies or procedures in place to deal with vilification that might be occurring in the online environment. There is no requirement for training of staff in the detection or acknowledgement of hate where it might be occurring in online spaces and the steps that are thus taken to remove that kind of content. And I think that is a significant problem. You know, I am not suggesting that some of the apps are not doing some of those things. Some of them may be. I do not know what happens behind the scenes in some of them, but there is no expectation or requirement that is placed upon them to try to craft more safe and secure environments.

The CHAIR: What would you like to see in that space then?

Adam BOURNE: I mean, as a minimum, those two things that I think I pointed to: having a requirement for policies and processes for handling and dealing with vilification and training of staff in that recognition. I think age verification has a part to play, and this was brought up in previous testimony.

The CHAIR: Okay. My time is just up. We could probably talk about it for hours, but I will go to Mr Galea.

Michael GALEA: Thank you, Chair. Thanks, Adam. *Private Lives*, as you have gone through, does have a lot of data in it, and it does inform different levels of government in terms of the queer community. What specifics can you go to? I think it is chapter 6 that talks about experiences of discrimination, but what sorts of insights can it give into crimes and hate crimes?

Adam BOURNE: Thanks, Michael. It is lovely that you have a copy in front of you.

The CHAIR: Where did you get that from?

Michael GALEA: I found it.

Adam BOURNE: The question asks if you have experienced a variety of different kinds of experiences within the last 12 months specifically in relation to your sex, gender or sexuality, and it captures, then, issues relating to verbal abuse and assault, sexual assault, offences – you know, being spat at, threats with a weapon, physically being assaulted, theft. It is a long list of the kinds of things. If any of those acts are occurring on the basis of someone's gender or sexuality, then I think – you know, lots of those would fall into the prism of what would thus be constituted as a hate crime. That would be my simple response.

Michael GALEA: Thank you. Now, I realise it is not reasonable to put on your team the responsibility of mapping all crime events against LGBTIQ+ people, but especially in light of the under-reporting that we heard from Thorne Harbour and from Switchboard earlier today, do you think that in light of the changing trends of crimes and attacks that we are seeing, particularly on gay men and others who engage in those apps, there are maybe some different lines of questioning that you would be looking into in future editions of *Private Lives*?

Adam BOURNE: Yes. I am a researcher, so I always think more research needs to happen. But I think in this instance there are some really significant data gaps. We run *Private Lives* as a health and wellbeing survey, and we have done for more than 20 years. We capture data in that survey relating to experiences of violence, harassment and abuse because we have good reason to believe that those are associated with worse health outcomes, particularly mental health outcomes. If someone has an experience of one or more of those things on that list that I indicated, they can be anywhere between three and five times more likely to have experienced an attempt of suicide in the last 12 months and have significantly elevated rates of psychological distress. All of that said, they are a snapshot of information relating to the experience of hate crimes. And there is lots more that I think we need to be capturing that nuances – you know, the specifics of the incident, the setting in which it was occurring, the perpetrators of the incident, the experience of reporting through to the police, what that experience of reporting looked and felt like and the extent to which they felt supported by victim support services, counselling services and the like. We have snapshots of that information across a range of different data sources, qualitative and quantitative, but we lack in Australia a really significant, weighty dataset that can speak to all of those things. So my answer to your question is yes, I would love to see those kinds of things happen.

Michael GALEA: A lot of the submissions that we have received for this inquiry give some very harrowing personal experiences and then explain how the system, through the judicial system or through support systems, either ameliorated or exacerbated their stresses and caused, in some cases, mental health issues or other serious distresses for those people. You are saying that that is something that you see in the data as well, a correlation between the members of the community experiencing some sort of abuse or harassment, of whichever degree that might be, and increased mental health concerns or other issues as a result. Or is it a case of not necessarily correlation and causation –

Adam BOURNE: No. I can answer that quite simply. The single most reliable predictor shown in our data, and in pretty much every survey of a similar nature conducted anywhere around the world, of someone having attempted to take their own life is whether they have experienced violence or abuse on the basis of their gender or sexuality. It is one of the worst indicators of poor mental health and suicidality, and that is repeated time and time again.

Michael GALEA: More than anything else?

Adam BOURNE: More than anything else.

Michael GALEA: Thank you. Obviously the LGBTIQ+ community is a very broad and diverse group. I suspect I might know the answer, but it would be helpful to have this from you. Which parts of the community are more likely to experience these types of incidents?

Adam BOURNE: My first answer is to say all of them. It is a matter of degrees. It is terrible for all parts of the community; it is just even more terrible for some. Right now trans and gender-diverse people are subject to more hate than I think is true for any other part of the community. That is reflected in our 2019 data, and I see that trend in the data that is currently coming in in the survey that we are running now. I am trying to find the right way to phrase this. The thing that is most likely to expose you to violence is how visible you are as an LGBTIQ+ person, by which I mean things like whether or not you can pass as straight or whether you can pass as the gender to which you now affirm yourself. I can walk down the street wearing this kind of very formal outfit and no-one would necessarily guess as to my sexuality. I might dress or perform my sexuality or gender in a variety of different ways, which then unfortunately subjects me to more hate and violence than would otherwise be the case. For many trans and gender-diverse people, that is further complicated in a myriad of different ways – you know, the extent to which you might or might not be holding hands with a partner walking down the street. All of these kinds of things are really what expose you to violence, more so than just it being specifically about your gender or your sexuality, if that makes sense.

Michael GALEA: It does. Thank you. Thanks, Chair.

The CHAIR: Mr Puglielli, over to you.

Aiv PUGLIELLI: Thank you, Chair. Hi. Thank you for your contribution to this inquiry process. Can I speak specifically within the recommendations from your submission around mobilising the resources of the Department of Education to tackle anti-LGBTIQ+ prejudice and these ideologies that are proliferating particularly within those school settings where we are able to reach a lot of young people. We are hearing of instances where young people are the ones perpetrating these types of acts. With this goal of reaching them early to try and prevent these behaviours from occurring, can you speak more to what changes you would like to see in the way that we use the Department of Education resources and changes within those settings to reach people before the offences occur?

Adam BOURNE: Sure. I think Victoria has a program of inclusive education that it should feel very proud of. It still commits to ensuring safe school environments for LGBTIQ+ young people, and that is because those young people have some of the highest rates of suicide or psychological distress that you will find among any part of the population. I think there are some really solid building blocks there for us to work with. Those are about enabling respectful and inclusive environments, but I think they can go a step further in tackling prejudice face on, tackling hostile views that might exist with respect to gender and sexuality and training teachers in how to have conversations that challenge, sensitively, young people who might be expressing those kinds of views and thinking about processes to engage them in a dialogue with queer people to help them understand and not be fearful of difference. Often really what lies at the heart of hate crime is a fear of difference, so I think enabling teachers to have those kinds of conversations would be a step to take along this road.

Aiv PUGLIELLI: Thank you. Speaking more broadly to some of the recommendations you have made in this space, are there any other gaps that you identify within school settings where we could by making some changes help prevent proliferation of these types of ideologies that somehow it is okay to go out and attack someone on the basis of who they are or for loving who they love? For example, you mentioned changes around the school chaplaincy program. There might be others that you want to speak to.

Adam BOURNE: We make the point in there that with the school chaplaincy programs there is a lack of clarity in policy around a chaplain's ability – the extent to which they support someone who is LGBTIQ. I think anyone who is coming forward wanting to discuss their gender identity or sexuality in any kind of school environment needs to feel that they can do so safely and that they will be respected at the point of doing so. That was the point we were trying to make.

Aiv PUGLIELLI: Thank you. Just with the time I have remaining, you also make recommendations regarding rehabilitation programs within youth justice settings. Particularly if we are talking about, for example, after one of these acts has occurred – we might be talking about a group setting where a group of young people

have been involved in one of these offences being perpetrated – what does that look like in practice? It might be confronting to some people to think of this idea of having to rehabilitate someone out of that type of mindset, that they are going out and committing these types of acts. Can you speak a bit more broadly to what you might be referring to here?

Adam BOURNE: I think this speaks to the point around restorative justice, which is something that has come about and was just talked about in the first session. Really what you are trying to do there is in a very trauma-informed way have conversations with both the perpetrators and victim-survivors of an incident to understand their thoughts and feelings and perspectives on what occurred and then try to take the perpetrator on a journey to understand the world from the victim-survivor's perspective. That can be things like hosting a conference between the perpetrator, plural or singular, and the victim-survivor to help them understand what their world looks like to help challenge some of the fear that can exist that some perpetrators might hold, which was shaping consciously or unconsciously their act in the first place. Stepping towards a greater sense of understanding and respect is a big part of what you try to do in these kinds of restorative justice programs.

Aiv PUGLIELLI: Thank you. Are there particular models that exist, perhaps even internationally, that we should be looking to in this sort of rehabilitative, restorative area of justice for people who are victims of these types of incidents?

Adam BOURNE: I would have to take on notice whether there was something specific to LGBTIQ hate crimes. I am happy to come back to you on that. But there are other examples that can be found in relation to religious hate crimes and violent extremism – restorative justice programs that bring together people of different faiths to understand one another's perspectives in that kind of conference. Those exist here within Australia. But for LGBTQ, I would need to take that on notice.

Aiv PUGLIELLI: No worries. Thank you.

The CHAIR: Mrs Hermans, over to you.

Ann-Marie HERMANS: Thank you. Thank you very much, Professor Adam. You are into research, which I applaud. I represent the south-east. We have an extensive amount of crime. All crimes are under-reported in the south-east. Are you aware of that?

Adam BOURNE: Yes.

Ann-Marie HERMANS: To me, again, this is not unusual data – to have under-reported crimes across the board in a region and that then it would be likely that there would be under-reported crimes that are specifically of this nature? Would you agree with that?

Adam BOURNE: I think it is all a matter of degrees. I do not know the extent of estimated under-reporting for non-LGBTIQ-related crimes in the south-east, so I could not necessarily make a comparison one with another.

Ann-Marie HERMANS: It is about the same as what has been quoted as being under-reported for the LGBTIQ. It is actually not really any different. I have been to recent crime forums, so I just wanted to make that point. Your data came from 2019, which I suspect is prior to the changes in the law to marriage –

Adam BOURNE: No, it was just post that.

Ann-Marie HERMANS: Immediately post that the data was released, but it was gathered prior.

Adam BOURNE: No, the data was collected in 2019. It was published in 2020. From memory, marriage equality passed in 2017 – at the end of 2017.

Ann-Marie HERMANS: I thought it was 2019. You are probably right; I would have to look that up. You mentioned also religious hate crimes. I have done a little bit of research in recent times and notice that religions like Wicca, paganism et cetera, are very, very embracing of LGBTIQ. Would you say that there is a higher percentage of people in the LGBTIQ community, maybe more in the transgender side of things, that are more involved in religions that are more embracing, like paganism and Wicca?

Adam BOURNE: That is not a question I feel equipped to answer.

Ann-Marie HERMANS: Okay. Just noting that the attack is on school chaplains, many of which would be representing religions but would not necessarily be there in a religious capacity if they are in a government school. Are you aware that the laws that were passed on the conversion therapy actually restrict anybody in a religious capacity from being able to discuss gender issues, that they do not have the freedom to actually discuss that in any capacity? They cannot have those discussions. It is not comfortable for them.

Adam BOURNE: I am aware of that, yes.

Ann-Marie HERMANS: Do you think that it is fair then to say that people are being discriminated against by school chaplains because they are not having those discussions if they are not legally able to have those discussions?

Adam BOURNE: The chaplains are still equipped to make referrals through to organisations and to individuals who are empowered to have such discussions. Our concern is that it is not always happening.

Ann-Marie HERMANS: But it is actually not their role to do that either as a school chaplain. You would be aware of that too.

Adam BOURNE: I would hope that if a person presented in a distressed state in relation to their gender or sexuality, then they would act as a human and would make an appropriate referral.

Ann-Marie HERMANS: If they have the resources, I suppose. I do know that for the most part chaplains would not feel comfortable to even engage in the conversation because of the laws being so restrictive – they do not actually allow them to have that opportunity. I do not even think that they would feel necessarily comfortable, and maybe that is a training ground – it is not like doctors where they know how to refer – that they would actually have the capacity or the knowledge to even be able to do that. Would that be a fair statement, or you wouldn't have the research around that?

Adam BOURNE: I would not have the research on that.

Ann-Marie HERMANS: Okay. You have talked about rehabilitation from mindsets. There has been the concern that it has got worse, which are your own words. It has actually got worse since 2019, and you are expecting the data to show that. But we have had the Safe Schools program and the rights and respectful relationships program in schools during that time. Would you say then that is a failure of these programs, that they are actually not working?

Adam BOURNE: I would say that the hostile forces in the world are sometimes larger and stronger than the proactive forces in the world. I would say that programs like Safe Schools have undoubtedly enabled safer environments for many LGBTIQ+ young people. Have they accomplished absolutely everything in the face of massive multibillion-dollar corporations in social media and highly funded and resourced people in the manosphere and a whole host of other actors external to school environments? And have they been able to hold back that tide? Possibly not. I do not think that necessarily reflects a failure of the Safe Schools program.

The CHAIR: Thank you. I will now hand over to Mr Batchelor.

Ryan BATCHELOR: Thanks, Chair. Adam, thanks so much for coming in today, for your evidence and for the work that you have done. I just want to touch on your perspectives on Victoria Police and how as an organisation they might have evolved, your perspective on the evolution of Victoria Police with respect to LGBTIQ+ issues and liaison in recent years and maybe a little bit more on where you think it still needs to go.

Adam BOURNE: Great question. I have a lot of time for VicPol. I sit as a member of the LGBTIQ ministerial taskforce, as its co-chair, and the taskforce was invited to meet with Shane Patton, then the commander several years ago. This was one of the first acts he did in stepping into that role, and that to me was a really visible reflection of the leadership of the police wanting to make a strong and public statement around their support for LGBTIQ communities. At a leadership level I think we have seen some really significant change. I also think it is laudable that we have introduced mandatory training in relation to LGBTIQ-inclusive practice within the police force. As I understand it, just over 70 per cent of police have thus far been trained,

and we would like to see that kind of training continue on a regular basis. That is a kind of 101 training for the time being to understand the terminology that is being utilised, to understand some of the specific crimes that might be reported. But similar to my colleagues who spoke a moment ago, I think a specific hate crimes unit that understands the nuance and the dynamics that can exist within relationships and communities that are very specific to LGBTIQ communities is still lacking, and we would like to see that going forward. And I would like to see the training evaluated. It is great that it is occurring, but if it is continued –

Ryan BATCHELOR: You may not be an expert on the internal workings of Victoria Police's training, but how long have they been doing it for?

Adam BOURNE: I want to suggest it was towards the end of last year that it was introduced. It came on the back of a recommendation from a coronial inquiry into a cluster of transgender-related suicides where it was felt that the police were imperfect in their response to some of those suicides, and this was a recommendation that was then enacted. I would have to come back to you for the specifics, but my memory is that it was at the end of last year it started.

Ryan BATCHELOR: Sorry, I interrupted you on where you think that training needs to go.

Adam BOURNE: I was just saying it is great that it is occurring. It would just be good to see it evaluated to ensure we are actually getting the best bang for our buck in terms of the time that police are investing in this.

Ryan BATCHELOR: Right. You talked about liaison officers. What role do you think that they would play in Victoria Police with the community?

Adam BOURNE: There are a few dimensions to my answer. One is that difference between 'Are the police a safe place to go to?' and 'Are they perceived as a safe place to go to?'. That means that the police need to make continuous steps to earn the trust of the community so that people are willing to step forward to speak to them. I think that is one dimension of it: being present in queer physical spaces and places, showing up to events, helping them and community understand the role that they play. I think there is a role in that recognition of violence where it is occurring, calling it out for what it is and helping colleagues within their stations or within the police network more broadly. If we have those liaison officers who have the understanding of the dynamics and the different ways in which hate can be experienced, then we will get better at recognising it, we will get better at recording that within police systems, which is a major problem at the moment, and we will have a better sense of the pattern of what is going on and where resources need to be invested to tackle that.

Ryan BATCHELOR: Are there any jurisdictions or police forces that you think are doing it particularly well that we could look to for inspiration on how to improve those issues, particularly community perception of police's willingness to take their issues seriously?

Adam BOURNE: I might have to come back to you on that and note that tomorrow I am aware at the hearing there are some colleagues from UNSW who specifically work on issues relating to LGBTIQ policing who might be better equipped to answer that question.

Ryan BATCHELOR: No worries. Thanks, Chair.

The CHAIR: Thank you, Mr Batchelor. I will now go to those online. I will go to Ms Gray-Barberio first, and then I will go to Ms Watt after that. Anasina, over to you.

Anasina GRAY-BARBERIO: Thank you very much, Chair, and thank you, Professor Bourne, for your presentation and your submission. I really appreciate it. I just want to start with your membership of the LGBTIQA+ taskforce. Are you still the co-chair of that taskforce?

Adam BOURNE: I am, yes.

Anasina GRAY-BARBERIO: Fabulous. And when was the last time you met?

Adam BOURNE: We had our first meeting of the new term in the middle of March of this year.

Anasina GRAY-BARBERIO: Brilliant. That taskforce, for people that do not know, I guess provides strategic, high-level advice to the Minister for Equality. These recommendations are quite comprehensive.

Have you had an opportunity to speak to the Minister for Equality around addressing the issues in the community and the violence that is occurring, and what has the response been?

Adam BOURNE: Look, I have, on numerous occasions. I am fortunate enough to meet with Vicki – sorry, the minister – semi-regularly. Her response is one of absolute horror, I would say. She stepped into the role of Minister for Equality I want to say 12 or 18 months ago – forgive me for not remembering – and has taken the time to really understand who we are and the problems and experiences that we have been having. I think, you know, her time sitting in that seat has really seen the dawn and the emergence of our understanding about the hate crimes that are going on. You know, Vicki has been steadfast in her support for the community in this, and I kind of really applaud her efforts to raise its profile. She was able to help enable our presence before the Premier's anti-hate taskforce, which we did in the spring of last year, and we were able to speak to these issues as well.

Anasina GRAY-BARBERIO: And has there been any commitment to any of these issues?

Adam BOURNE: There is an ongoing discussion that came on the back of that meeting of the Premier's anti-hate taskforce in relation to alternate reporting systems for LGBTIQ+ hate crime. Those are currently still in development.

Anasina GRAY-BARBERIO: Okay. Your research is quite extensive. I want to ask you a question about whether your research has been able to reveal this, but are there any strong predictors for an individual who may perpetuate crime and violence against the LGBTIQ+ community? Has any, like you know, evidence come about in your field researching around the risk factors?

Adam BOURNE: Look, I can give half an answer to that one, Anasina. My focus of work is on the experiences, needs and outcomes of LGBTIQ+ people, so my work is not and my expertise is not with the general population who might hold hostile opinions or beliefs or feelings relating to LGBTIQ+ people. What I can say, though, is that in the vast majority of cases, perpetrators of hate crimes are cisgender men. They can vary in age wildly across the spectrum. They can vary in ethnicity quite considerably as well. We do not necessarily see concentrations within or among particular ethnic groups, although I should note that there are some pretty significant gaps in the data on that for the time being.

Anasina GRAY-BARBERIO: We have been hearing a lot about those significant data gaps to be able to really effectively get a complete picture of what is going on and the depth of harm that is happening in the community. In one of your recommendations you recommend the expansion of the justice navigator pilot. As far as you understand, that does not extend to the LGBTIQ+ community. Is that right?

Adam BOURNE: It is my understanding at the current time. If I can just continue on your point around the absence of data, I mean, this is probably the thing I spend my time talking about more than anything else. We have not, up until this year, been included within the census. We have not existed in any routine health surveillance systems. There is, you know, a myriad of things, structural barriers, to understanding the needs and experiences of LGBTIQ+ people because we are very rarely counted in the vast majority of spaces. That is slowly but surely starting to change over time. The introduction of a standard way of capturing data about gender and sexuality was introduced by the ABS in 2020. That is filtering its way through all sorts of different systems and structures, but we are still at a point in time where there are any number of questions we really struggle to answer because we just have not been made visible, and that is a structural problem.

Anasina GRAY-BARBERIO: But you are also in a position to really advocate this stuff to the high levels of government, right, Professor?

Adam BOURNE: Yes, and I do so repeatedly.

Anasina GRAY-BARBERIO: So data collection – and by no means am I suggesting you do not –

The CHAIR: So sorry, Anasina. Your time is up, but I am happy for you to finish your point if you like.

Anasina GRAY-BARBERIO: Thank you, Chair. Sorry. By no means was I suggesting that, Professor. I guess, you know, the lack of data also shows the erasure of experiences that the community is experiencing. If

you could just please recommend, if you can for the committee, in terms of addressing these data gaps, how can we prioritise that, given that it is a structural issue?

Adam BOURNE: Look, changing large-scale surveillance systems is always extremely time-consuming and far more costly than you might imagine. There are some short-term things that can be done in the design and delivery of community-level surveys that are independent of some of those formal surveillance systems. And if we were looking to get a very rapid account of what is going on in a far more detailed and nuanced way than we currently have, that is what I would probably recommend: the commissioning of a very specific hate crime survey of LGBTIQ+ people, with a view to reforming data systems in the longer term to better capture gender diversity and sexuality as well as crimes that are specific to LGBTIQ+ people, which sometimes just do not even appear within those kinds of surveillance mechanisms.

Anasina GRAY-BARBERIO: Thank you very much, Professor. Thank you, Chair.

The CHAIR: Thank you. Ms Watt, over to you.

Sheena WATT: Professor Bourne, thank you so much for joining us. I am going to ask a little bit about the perpetrators of these attacks. Do we have any idea how these people are being radicalised? Are there any insights that you could share with us? And I have possibly some questions following that around early intervention for that group.

Adam BOURNE: I think Chad from Thorne Harbour spoke to some of this a moment ago. There is limited research on this for the time being, and I want to foreground my statement by saying that. There certainly are indications that things like the manosphere are playing a significant role here, and often what is happening in those kinds of online environments is that they are constructing this idea that there is one type of way of being a man, right? To be a man is to occupy this dominant position within a social group or within a society. It is to exert your masculinity in very, very rigid ways. And it is that way of thinking which often shapes perpetration of violence against queer people. A man is supposed to act and behave like this, but an LGBTQ person or, you know, a gay man or a trans woman who had previously been assigned male at birth is subverting that, right? Like, they are flipping it on its head and they are not behaving like a man is supposed to behave. And so to simplify it down, I think that is certainly one of the key factors here.

Sheena WATT: Thank you. It has left us with a lot to think about. Where do you think the best points for early intervention are really with this group? And is there any research or findings that you can share with us about early intervention on, you know, some folks that have been captured essentially by the manosphere and other dangerous settings?

Adam BOURNE: To the best of my knowledge, evaluated evidence of that at the current time does not really exist, particularly in relation to early intervention with perpetrators of LGBTIQ+ hate crimes. I cannot speak to a specifically evaluated program there. I am sorry, Sheena.

Sheena WATT: Oh, gosh – hopeful thinking, then. I was going to go to a response about that. But truthfully, this is not just a Victorian issue; this is being felt nationally and internationally. My reflections are that this requires quite a considerable collaborative effort across jurisdictions, and I am hoping that perhaps our findings from this research will lend themselves to operating in partnership with other jurisdictions on this. I just wanted to ask about intersectionality with victims. Do we have any insights about who are the targets of these attacks? I am concerned about particularly vulnerable members of the LGBTI community that might be disproportionately targeted for these attacks and if you have got any comments on that.

Adam BOURNE: Yes, of course. I can reply to your specific question, and if you would allow me, I would like to reflect on your previous observation.

Sheena WATT: Yes. No problem.

Adam BOURNE: Again, I do not want to paint a picture that it is only within certain parts of the community, because it is all parts of the community that experience hate crime. As I said, trans and gender-diverse people are experiencing it much more so across the board, although the specifics of the kind of Grindr-facilitated hate crimes are much more – you know, principally here we are talking about gay, bisexual and queer men. A population which I think has not received as much attention in a lot of the conversation around

hate crime is people with disability. We did some work with the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability a few years ago, disaggregating data around experiences of violence and harassment, and it was deeply troubling to see such elevated rates of verbal abuse, physical abuse, harassment and a range of other experiences among queer people with disability, as compared to those without disability. I think that is a really important part of our population and a large proportion of our population which has not previously received the attention that it warrants.

I just want to make a kind of reflection on your reflection around the current state of things and this being cross-jurisdictional. If I may, Chair.

The CHAIR: You have got a little bit of time.

Adam BOURNE: Or I cannot; that is fine.

The CHAIR: No, no, please.

Adam BOURNE: It is simply to say that I feel sometimes that over the last few decades we have taken five steps forwards in advancing the wellbeing and human rights of LGBTIQ+ people, and I feel like in the last few years we have taken two, three and sometimes four steps backwards. I think the international environment has facilitated or enabled hostile speech around queer communities in a way that had not quite existed like this for a good 10 years or so before that. I did not think we would find ourselves back in a situation where it is publicly acceptable to say some of the things that I hear in the media and in political discourse now, and yet it is.

The CHAIR: That is time, Sheena, sorry. That brings an end to this session. Adam, thanks very much for your time and your evidence today. As I said, you will be provided with a proof version of the transcript once it is all ready to go. From us, thanks very much. We appreciate it.

Witness withdrew.