

Greater Bendigo LGBTIQA+ Inclusion Action Plan 2023-2025



CITY OF GREATER
BENDIGO

Acknowledgment of Country

The City of Greater Bendigo is on Dja Dja Wurrung and Taungurung Country. We acknowledge and extend our appreciation to the Dja Dja Wurrung and Taungurung People, the Traditional Owners of the land. We pay our respects to leaders and Elders past, present and future for they hold the memories, the traditions, the culture and the hopes of all Dja Dja Wurrung and Taungurung Peoples. We express our gratitude in the sharing of this land, our sorrow for the personal, spiritual and cultural costs of that sharing and our hope that we may walk forward together in harmony and in the spirit of healing.

We recognise a long tradition of First Nations' cultures inclusion of sexual and gender diversity, such as sistergirls, brotherboys and boywives, which existed before colonisation during 65,000+ years of existence.¹ We also acknowledge the important role First Nations people play in LGBTIQA+ communities.

¹ Todd Fernando, Embracing queer Indigenous Australia | Pursuit by The University of Melbourne (unimelb.edu.au)



Mayor's message



The City is committed to supporting LGBTIQ+ people to be their authentic selves and ensure they have equitable access to services and opportunities and are treated fairly, equitably and with respect.

The City of Greater Bendigo is pleased to present its first LGBTIQ+ Inclusion Action Plan (2023-2025).

The action plan provides a clear and achievable plan to guide its commitment to lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and gender diverse, intersex, queer/questioning and asexual people in our community.

It will help ensure the City's programs and services are inclusive of LGBTIQ+ people and that they feel supported, connected, visible and have a sense of belonging in Greater Bendigo. It also aims to strengthen partnerships to advocate for improved health and wellbeing, and address issues, gaps and opportunities that LGBTIQ+ people have identified are important to them.

The City is committed to supporting LGBTIQ+ people to be their authentic selves and ensure they have equitable access to services and opportunities and are treated fairly, equitably and with respect. The City also recognises and celebrates its LGBTIQ+ communities and their important contribution to making Greater Bendigo a diverse and vibrant community.

Council has a responsibility to help create a community that is a safe place for everyone, and the action plan will help create a safe community for LGBTIQ+ people who live, work, study or visit Greater Bendigo. The plan will also support the City to provide an inclusive workplace for LGBTIQ+ employees and volunteers.

I look forward to the implementation of the LGBTIQ+ Inclusion Action Plan to support our LGBTIQ+ communities and their families, staff and volunteers.

Cr Andrea Metcalf
Mayor, City of Greater Bendigo

Language

The City of Greater Bendigo acknowledges there are many acronyms used within LGBTIQ+ communities and that the acronym itself has limitations. The Action Plan uses LGBTIQ+ which stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual+, Trans and Gender-Diverse, Intersex, Queer and Questioning and Asexual and Aromantic. The + represents and acknowledges the limits of the acronym and the evolving nature of language that is used to describe and celebrate people's diverse experiences of gender, sexual orientation and sex characteristics.

We acknowledge that Aboriginal communities often use the terms 'sistergirls' and 'brotherboys' and use the acronym LGBTIQ+SB.² We also note that in the past 'queer' was used in a derogatory manner and is offensive to some older LGBTI people, so the Q is often deleted from the acronym when referring to older LGBTI communities.

In the Action Plan, the City refer to LGBTIQ+ people, families and communities to reflect the distinct and different groups under the umbrella term. We acknowledge that some groups overlap, however we recognise there is no single or homogenous 'LGBTIQ+ community' or person.



L	Lesbian
G	Gay
B	Bisexual
T	Trans and Gender-Diverse
I	Intersex
Q	Queer and Questioning
A	Asexual and Aromantic
+	A plus sign represents the infinite variety of identities outside of, or not represented by, the acronym
SB	Sistergirls and Brotherboys

². See Black Rainbow, see <https://blackrainbow.org.au/> and BlaQ Aboriginal Corporation <https://blaq.org.au/>

LGBTIQA+ people in Greater Bendigo

LGBTIQA+ people are key contributors to the community, with approximately 5,700 or more LGBTIQA+ people living in the City of Greater Bendigo. 5.8 per cent of the adult population identified as LGBTIQ+.³

This plan focuses on responding to the diverse needs, experiences and aspirations of LGBTIQA+ people within the City of Greater Bendigo. The actions aim to address the different needs of younger and older LGBTIQA+ people, of rainbow families, of trans and gender diverse people, and LGBTIQA+ people from multi-cultural backgrounds. The plan covers LGBTIQA+ people in the whole municipality, including small towns and rural communities within the City of Greater Bendigo.

We acknowledge that being LGBTIQA+ is only one part of someone's identity or experience. As well as being diverse in sexual orientation, gender identity or sex characteristics, LGBTIQA+ people are diverse in other ways such as being Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, ethnicity, religion, age or ability. They also have diverse experiences – such as being a migrant, asylum seeker, or carer. They may be experiencing gender-based family violence, mental ill-health, chronic ill-health, unemployment, poverty or homelessness.

3. This figure comes from Victorian Agency for Health Information (2020) *The Health and wellbeing of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer population in Victoria: Findings from the Victorian population health survey, 2017*. There is a lack of available and reliable data for Greater Bendigo, as well as for regional and rural Victoria.



The LGBTIQ+ Inclusion Action Plan

The aim of the LGBTIQ+ Inclusion Action Plan 2023-2025 is to provide a clear and achievable plan that guides the City's commitment to LGBTIQ+ people over a two-year timeframe supporting inclusion and participation for LGBTIQ+ people, families and communities and promoting diversity.

There are over 45 actions in this plan that show case the City's commitment to support events and activities that are safe and welcoming, to develop partnerships and advocate for improved health and wellbeing for LGBTIQ+ people.

The LGBTIQ+ Action Plan aligns with the Council Plan, 2021-2025 *Mir wimbul* and the City of Greater Bendigo Social Justice Framework (2022-2032). The LGBTIQ+ Action Plan supports the four key principles of the Social Justice Framework:

- Human Rights,
- Access and Inclusion,
- Equity and
- Participation in decision-making.

The LGBTIQ+ Action Plan is aligned to Healthy Greater Bendigo, the Municipal Health and Wellbeing Plan 2021-2025 and to the five areas for action:

1. **Healthy and well**
2. **Able to participate**
3. **Connected to culture and community**
4. **Safe and secure**
5. **Liveable**

The Action Plan delivers the City's commitment to 'Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, gender diverse, queer and intersex people and to celebrate our LGBTIQ+ community and stand up against homophobia, biphobia, transphobia and intersex discrimination', made in the Social Justice Framework. The Action Plan also supports the City's responsibilities under State and Commonwealth government legislation.

The final Action Plan was developed from community wide feedback from more than 125 community members, collected between May 17 and June 23, 2023.

The 2023-2025 LGBTIQ+ Action Plan will be implemented within the current resources and budgets of departments within the City.





Rainbow Ready Roadmap

The LGBTIQ+ Action Plan has been guided by the Victorian Government's Rainbow Ready Roadmap, released in 2022.

The roadmap supports the Victorian Government's Pride in our future: Victoria's LGBTIQ+ strategy 2022-32 by enabling the creation of safe, strong and sustainable communities. Developed through extensive consultation with LGBTIQ+ communities, including through the LGBTIQ+ Rural and Regional Roadshow, the roadmap aims to address challenges faced by LGBTIQ+ people in rural and regional Victoria.

The LGBTIQ+ Action Plan indicators are from the Rainbow Ready Roadmap Local Government Setting Guide, which aim to guide local government to become more LGBTIQ+ inclusive and deliver on their commitment to drive LGBTIQ+ inclusion.

The goal of the local government Rainbow Ready roadmap is for local government to show leadership in LGBTIQ+ inclusivity to address the needs of LGBTIQ+ constituents and to build a culture of LGBTIQ+ inclusivity in the municipality.

Why is the plan important?

Many LGBTIQ+ people live happy, connected, positive and healthy lives. Yet, Pride in our future: Victoria's LGBTIQ+ strategy 2022-32 found that LGBTIQ+ Victorians faced higher levels of unfair treatment, discrimination, social exclusion, abuse and harassment. These figures were higher in regional and rural areas and for LGBTIQ+ people from multicultural backgrounds. It said that 'the single strongest and most consistent predictor of poor mental health and wellbeing among LGBTIQ+ communities is experiences of abuse, harassment or assault'.

An LGBTIQ+ Inclusion Action Plan will help to deliver LGBTIQ+ safe and inclusive services, facilities, programs and events and provide information and training to staff.

The plan aims to reduce the likelihood of direct or indirect discrimination related to sexual orientation, gender identity or intersex status.

City of Greater Bendigo LGBTIQA+ Inclusion Action Plan

Goal of the local government Rainbow Ready roadmap:

The City of Greater Bendigo shows leadership in LGBTIQA+ inclusivity to address the needs of LGBTIQA+ constituents and to build a culture of LGBTIQA+ inclusivity in Greater Bendigo.

1. LGBTIQA+ people are healthy and well

Rainbow Ready Roadmap Indicator	Action
	1.1. Build staff capacity to consider LGBTIQA+ inclusion and wellbeing in the development or review of all policies, programs and services that have a direct and significant impact on the public via the Equity Impact Assessment process.
	1.2. Support inclusive practice of Rainbow Families by providing LGBTIQA+ inclusive resources at the City's Maternal and Child Health Centres, Early Learning Centres/ Kindergartens and Library Services.
	1.3. Advocate to State and Federal Government on issues relating to LGBTIQA+ health and wellbeing, safety, housing and homelessness and inclusion.
	1.4. Develop partnerships to support the capacity of community sport and sporting, aquatic and leisure facilities to be LGBTIQA+ inclusive.



2. LGBTIQA+ people are safe and secure

Rainbow Ready Roadmap Indicator	Action
Bookings and assessment processes are LGBTIQA+ inclusive	2.1. Develop staff capacity to audit and improve booking, assessment and intake forms and correspondence to ensure they are LGBTIQA+ inclusive across City services.
LGBTIQA+ groups and services are supported to access City spaces	2.2. Develop capacity of LGBTIQA+ groups to access City spaces by holding a workshop covering: event booking system, activity in a public place permit, risk management plan, event waste management plan, site plan, public liability insurance, venue key access.
The City provides all gender bathroom and change room options	2.3. Conduct literature review on public toilet signage and configuration to determine best practice in promoting gender accessibility and inclusion. [Gender Equity Action Plan]
	2.4. Advocate for changes to the National Construction Code to improve inclusion of toilet facilities for all genders.
	2.5. Consider the inclusion of all-gender toilet facilities and change rooms in all new and redeveloped City infrastructure (via the Equity Impact Assessment process or Project Management Feasibility).
Potential risks to the safety of LGBTIQA+ group members are identified and minimised	2.6. Advocate for LGBTIQA+ inclusion in family violence and sexual assault sector, including addressing key service gaps and strengthening LGBTIQA+ capability. [Gender Equity Action Plan]
	2.7. Source and promote a training session on improving family violence services responses to LGBTIQA+ family violence during the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-based violence.
	2.8. Conduct a cultural safety risk analysis regarding LGBTIQA+ community members using City facilities and services, piloting the use of Rainbow Tick self-assessments.
	2.9. Scope and embed LGBTIQA+ inclusive practice within the City's emergency relief centres.
The City responds to LGBTIQA+ phobic incidents by advocating for the rights of LGBTIQA+ members and taking steps to prevent future incidents	2.10. Respond to LGBTIQA+ phobic social media postings to reduce harm to LGBTIQA+ community.
	2.11. Promote the link to the Community Reporting Tool (Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission) for discrimination and breaches of human rights is visible on City web page/s and on LGBTIQA+ City web page.
	2.12. Enforce the Community Local Law to protect LGBTIQA+ community members in a public place from threatening, abusive or insulting words or behaviour which interferes with their use or enjoyment of that public place.

3. LGBTIQ+ people are able to participate

Rainbow Ready Roadmap Indicator	Action
The council has a strategy or plan for LGBTIQ+ inclusion	3.1. Provide an annual report to community about the progress made against the Action Plan.
LGBTIQ+ community members take part in council committees and in council planning	3.2. Establish mechanisms for LGBTIQ+ community members to provide advice and feedback on the City's policies, programs and services and promote community engagement processes (including Let's Talk) to LGBTIQ+ communities, so the voice of LGBTIQ+ community members is heard in council planning processes.
	3.3. Promote recruitment processes for City Committees to LGBTIQ+ communities and consider LGBTIQ+ representation, alongside other diversity demographics.
City grants are provided to support local LGBTIQ+ initiatives	3.4. Promote available grants (City and others) to local LGBTIQ+ groups and organisations to assist them to deliver community led events and programs.
	3.5. Strengthen grant seeking capabilities within LGBTIQ+ communities through mechanisms such as workshops.
The City educates its staff and volunteers on LGBTIQ+ inclusion	3.6. Provide LGBTIQ+ inclusion training to City Staff, trainees, Councillors, Youth Councillors and volunteers.
	3.7. Develop LGBTIQ+ inclusive practice guide that covers terminology and communication protocols – for City staff, trainees, Councillors, Youth Councillors, volunteers and contractors.
The City provides an inclusive workplace for LGBTIQ+ employees and volunteers	3.8. Support gender diverse and LGBTIQ+ inclusive employment practices by providing resources and supports for people managers. [Gender Equity Action Plan]
	3.9. Update systems and processes to have the ability to capture gender diversity and other intersectional identity factors of staff members outlined in the Gender Equality Act 2020. [Gender Equity Action Plan]
	3.10. Conduct a review of human resources systems and practices to ensure they are inclusive for LGBTIQ+ staff, volunteers and trainees.



4. LGBTIQA+ people are connected to culture and community

Rainbow Ready Roadmap Indicator	Action
The City supports local LGBTIQA+ events	4.1. Support local LGBTIQA+ events (Transgender Day of Visibility, IDAHOBIT, Wear it Purple and Transgender Day of Remembrance) alongside LGBTIQA+ organisations and communities.
	4.2. Support Bendigo Pride Festival as Greater Bendigo's main LGBTIQA+ festival.
	4.3. Support young people to feel safe about their gender identity and promote gender equity through events such as IDAHOBIT and Wear it Purple Day. [Youth Action Plan]
	4.4. Support events or social program for older LGBTI people to connect, including intergenerationally, to reduce social isolation and loneliness.
	4.5. Support LGBTIQA+ event for culturally diverse LGBTIQA+ people as part of Harmony Week.
	4.6. Convene the Greater Bendigo Rainbow Coalition to support networking and collaboration between the City, service providers, leading employers and LGBTIQA+ organisations.
	4.7. Explore the development of both temporary and permanent public art initiatives that address the underrepresentation of LGBTIQA+ Public Art, culture and heritage.
The City has a statement of LGBTIQA+ inclusion that is publicly visible	4.8. Include statement of the City's commitment to LGBTIQA+ communities on a City LGBTIQA+ web page.
	4.9. Invite the Mayor to make a statement regarding Council's commitment to LGBTIQA+ inclusion every year and the Mayor, Councillors and Youth Councillors are invited to attend external events focussed on LGBTIQA+ inclusion.
	4.10. Investigate procurement LGBTIQA+ inclusive practices, including processes to increase awareness of tenderers, suppliers and contractors of how to prevent discrimination against LGBTIQA+ people in employment or service delivery and ways social procurement practices can reduce barriers faced by LGBTIQA+ people.
City information incorporates LGBTIQA+ inclusive language and images	4.11. Conduct photoshoots to obtain images of Rainbow families, LGBTI+ elders, LGBTIQA+ young people and trans and gender diverse community members, which can be added to the City's image library.
	4.12. Develop and expand staff capacity to use LGBTIQA+ inclusive language and images.
	4.13. Review branding and service delivery of Maternal and Child Health to consider how rainbow families are actively considered, included and represented in service name and delivery [Gender Equity Action Plan]
The Council takes opportunities to fly the rainbow or trans flags	4.14. The City flies the Progress Pride Rainbow flag and/or Transgender flags on LGBTIQA+ days of significance (IDAHOBIT, Transgender Day of Visibility, Transgender Day of Remembrance, Wear it Purple) if requested by LGBTIQA+ communities.
The City's website and social media accounts profile LGBTIQA+ initiatives, events, people and resources	4.15. The City's social media accounts profile LGBTIQA+ days of significance and City run LGBTIQA+ initiatives and events.
	4.16. Develop a LGBTIQA+ web page on the City's website with information and resources for community members.
	4.17. CONNECT Greater Bendigo website has LGBTIQA+ category for groups, health and community services and events and supports LGBTIQA+ groups and services to register and list events.

5. LGBTIQA+ people have access to a liveable environment

Rainbow Ready Roadmap Indicator	Action
	5.1. Consider the needs of LGBTIQA+ people when reviewing the Affordable Housing Action Plan, particularly in increasing the diversity of available housing and increasing the supply of social housing.
	5.2. Consider the needs of LGBTIQA+ people in implementing the Greater Bendigo Public Space plan, working to improve our built and natural environments to be safe and encourage social connection.
	5.3. Create an annual floral and/or art display to coincide with a significant LGBTIQA+ Pride event.



Acknowledgements

The City of Greater Bendigo would like to thank and acknowledge LGBTIQ+ people, their families and LGBTIQ+ groups who generously gave their time and shared their lived experiences and knowledge in providing feedback on the draft LGBTIQ+ Action Plan.

LGBTIQ+ organisations/groups included:

- Bendigo Passionfruits
- Bendigo Pride Festival
- Bendigo Queer Arts Festival
- Bendigo Queer Film Festival
- Greater Bendigo Rainbow Coalition
- headspace Bendigo HEY Diversity Groups: FROGS (Full Range of Genders and Sexuality) and TADPOLES (Trans and Diverse People Openly Loving Everyone's Sexuality)
- headspace Bendigo Parent Support Group for Parents of Trans and Gender Diverse Young People
- Thorne Harbour Country
- Trans and Gender Diverse Bendigo and Beyond

We would also like to thank our rainbow allies – both community members and staff in community and public health; multicultural services; family violence support services; leisure facilities; and disability organisations who took the time to provide feedback.

We acknowledge the important contributions of the City of Greater Bendigo Youth Council, City of Greater Bendigo LGBTIQ+ identifying staff and rainbow allies across the organisation.

Input, contributions, ideas and support from people in all these different areas greatly assisted in developing and finalising the LGBTIQ+ Action Plan, 2023-2025. Thank you!







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