

EMBRACING EQUALITY CHARTER

Diversity is a fact. Equity is a choice. Inclusion is an action. Belonging is an outcome. - Arthur Chan

VISION

We, the undersigned allies of LGBTIQ+ communities, pledge to embrace equality and work to end the discrimination experienced by lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and gender diverse, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ+) people in Victoria.

Our vision is for safe, strong and sustainable LGBTIQ+ communities. This can only be realised through sustainably funded community-controlled LGBTIQ+ services, a service and education system that is safe, inclusive and affirming of LGBTIQ+ people, and a society in which LGBTIQ+ Victorians and their families are safe, equal, and enjoy the benefits of full economic, educational and community participation.

LGBTIQ+ people represent diverse, distinct and at times intersecting communities. For example, Aboriginal LGBTIQ+ people can experience prejudice based on their race and LGBTIQ+ status. This diversity must be understood and embraced. This can only be achieved through full participation and shared decision making of LGBTIQ+ people and their representative bodies in all matters that impact LGBTIQ+ people. We acknowledge the need to create space for a variety of LGBTIQ+ voices – young people, older people, Aboriginal people, disabled people, and people from diverse cultural backgrounds.

We have come far and we are heading in the right direction, but we still have a long way to go. Marriage equality and the ban on conversion practices in Victoria are welcome reforms, but historical oppression, persecution and continuing disadvantage and discrimination are holding LGBTIQ+ communities back. Together, we can change this.

While LGBTIQ+ communities are resilient, across almost every measure of health and wellbeing LGBTIQ+ people fare significantly worse than non-LGBTIQ+ people. LGBTIQ+ people experience disproportionately higher rates of substance misuse and homelessness, and the mental health of LGBTIQ+ people has been at crisis levels for decades with no signs of improvement.

The current service system is not working for LGBTIQ+ people. Many LGBTIQ+ people delay seeking the treatment and support they need due to the fear of stigma and discrimination. Services must be LGBTIQ+ inclusive and affirming to allay these fears and improve service uptake. The education system needs to embed support for LGBTIQ+ young people and give them the best start in life.

Community-controlled LGBTIQ+ services are initiated and operated by and for LGBTIQ+ communities to provide safe, trusted and culturally appropriate services. Ensuring consumer choice and access to culturally safe, sustainably funded community-controlled LGBTIQ+ services is essential to improving health and wellbeing outcomes for LGBTIQ+ people in Victoria.

TO EMBRACE EQUALITY, WE WILL:

- Respect, protect and promote the human rights of LGBTIQ+ people in Victoria.
- Continuously prioritise advocating for reforms that dismantle structural drivers of discrimination and oppression against LGBTIQ+ people.
- Ensure all LGBTIQ+ Victorians have access to safe, culturally appropriate, accessible, and high-quality services.
- Support and sustainably fund the growth and development of the community-controlled LGBTIQ+ sector and services to enable service provision to LGBTIQ+ people across Victoria.
- Ensure robust LGBTIQ+ inclusive practice across the service and education system.
- Ensure full participation and shared decision-making of LGBTIQ+ people and their representative bodies in all matters that impact on LGBTIQ+ people, ensuring the LGBTIQ+ voice is given the opportunity to speak and be listened to.
- Work in partnership to systematically address the social determinants of health inequality for LGBTIQ+ people.
- Build on the research and evidence base for what works to improve the health and wellbeing of LGBTIQ+ young people and adults.

This is only possible if community-controlled LGBTIQ+ organisations, mainstream organisations, Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisations and the Victorian Government work in close partnership. We must ensure that community-controlled LGBTIQ+ services are sustainable, the service system is inclusive, and that the necessary funding and resources are made available to achieve this.

Together we can and must end the inequities and discrimination experienced by LGBTIQ+ people. Only then will we have truly embraced equality.

