

EMBRACING EQUALITY PLEDGE

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

VISION

We, the undersigned service provider, 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 LGBTIQ+ community-controlled 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.

LGBTIQ+ community-controlled 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 LGBTIQ+ community-controlled services is essential to improving health and wellbeing outcomes for LGBTIQ+ people in Victoria.

AS A SERVICE PROVIDER, WE ENDORSE THE EMBRACING EQUALITY CHARTER AND PLEDGE TO:

- Establish and maintain relationships with LGBTIQ+ communities and services.
- Ensure all staff receive LGBTIQ+ inclusive practice training.
- Protect LGBTIQ+ staff and service users from discrimination, including by promoting a culture of respect and inclusion, and embedding formal structures that promote the reporting of instances of discrimination.
- Ensure systems of care are safe and culturally appropriate for LGBTIQ+ people, including by establishing and maintaining referral arrangements with LGBTIQ+ services, and evaluation processes that ensure the cultural needs of LGBTIQ+ people are addressed when referrals and service needs are being considered.
- Improve organisational understanding of intersectionality to address different modes of discrimination and privilege, including but not limited to the intersections of people who are both LGBTIQ+ and Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.

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



Acknowledgement: The Embracing Equality Charter and Pledge draw on the wisdom, experience and leadership of Aboriginal community-controlled organisations in championing the community-controlled service model and the Closing the Gap campaign. We recognise the intersectional lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander LGBTIQ+ people and the devastating role colonisation has played in their Communities. We acknowledge the marginalisation and social isolation that comes from being in this intersection.