

DOMESTIC  
VIOLENCE  
VICTORIA

## Victorian LGBTIQ Strategy Submission

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## About Domestic Violence Victoria:

Domestic Violence Victoria (DV Vic) is the peak body for specialist family violence response services for victims-survivors in Victoria. We are an independent, non-government organisation that leads, organises, advocates for, and acts on behalf of its members utilising an intersectional feminist approach. However, DV Vic is ultimately accountable to victims-survivors of family violence and works in their best interests.

DV Vic's work is focused on advocating for, supporting, and building the capacity of specialist family violence practice and service delivery for victims-survivors; system reform; and research, policy development and law reform. DV Vic analyses the views and experiences of member organisations, the evidence on family violence, and the lived experience of victims-survivors, and translates this into innovative and contemporary policy, practice, and advocacy.

DV Vic holds a central position in the Victorian family violence system and is one of the key agencies with responsibility for providing family violence subject matter expertise, technical assistance, capacity building, and policy and practice advice to the specialist family violence service sector, broader sectors, Government, and other partners and stakeholders.

With over 60 members, DV Vic has unprecedented access to both leadership and practice levels of services and as such is well-placed to lead and champion change.

## Submission Context and Scope:

DV Vic welcomed the 2015 Victorian Family Violence Royal Commission recommendations aimed at creating a more inclusive family violence service sector. DV Vic recognises that family violence occurs in all communities and has been particularly engaged over recent years with providing direct support to the Specialist Family Violence Service (SVFS) sector as well as championing change in regard to access and inclusion for LGBTIQ people.

Rather than addressing specific questions in the LGBTIQ Strategy Discussion Paper we have sought to provide an overview of our key learnings that touch on questions raised for consideration, particularly in relation to inclusive services and family violence. We have done this in the hopes that our experience will provide guidance for the development of the strategy and contribute to greater inclusion of Victorian LGBTIQ communities across service sectors.

## Creating Change:

DV Vic recognises the historical and structural barriers that can prevent LGBTIQ people accessing services, and that up until recently LGBTIQ people largely lacked visibility in the family violence service system. There has also been a lack of recognition of family violence dynamics within LGBTIQ communities and organisations. Whilst there has been some progress, there is still a long way to go to ensure that the family violence service system offers accessible and inclusive paths to safety for LGBTIQ victim/survivors and that LGBTIQ perpetrators have appropriate services.

Over the past two years, a range of Government initiatives were funded in Victoria to support LGBTIQ inclusion across the family violence sector as well as the LGBTIQ community. These included (but not limited to):

- Part-funding of 20 family violence services to achieve Rainbow Tick
- The provision of How2 Rainbow Tick training to all family violence services
- The development of the LGBTIQ w/respect consortium website for information on LGBTIQ family violence
- The development of a more inclusive Risk Assessment for family violence intake (MARAM)
- Neighbourhood Justice Centre LGBTIQ Applicant/Responder Pilot Program
- Therapeutic Pilot programs in LGBTIQ organisations responding to family violence
- The development of “Everybody Matters” Statement

DVvic has supported this work in the following ways:

### Direct sector support:

- Support of all family violence services undergoing Rainbow Tick with the provision of advice and information, mentoring and advocacy
- Awareness and capacity-building workshops across the family violence sector
- The development of an active state-wide Community of Practice with online platforms and over 54 members
- Development of an online LGBTIQ Family Violence Information Hub for agencies
- Development and delivery of LGBTIQ specialist forums and awareness raising events for the family violence sector
- The development of an inclusive language paper for specialist family violence services.
- Partnering with LGBTIQ organisations on awareness raising projects and events
- Celebration and recognition of specific LGBTIQ days
- Sharing resources and knowledge to support ACCO Rainbow Tick processes

### Structural and systemic support:

- Advocacy for policy and legislative reform, for example the Religious Discrimination Act Submission, the Change to Victorian Births, Deaths and Marriages Act etc
- Input into the development of the *Code of Practice: Principles and Standards for Specialist Family Violence Services for Victim-Survivors*.

## What have we learned?

DV VIC acknowledges the significant dedication of resources that have been applied to building levels of LGBTIQ inclusion in the family violence service system. Further progress in increasing levels of inclusion and improving outcomes for LGBTIQ people might be made by considering what has been learnt so far.

- Creating inclusive cultural change in service delivery sectors requires time and resources over the medium term. Most of the funding support allocated to LGBTIQ inclusion in the family

violence service system was short-term with one-year contracts being most common. This has meant that the capacity to plan, engage, sustain, and embed inclusive policy and practice at a systemic level was severely limited.

- Where possible, any future inclusion strategies need to be developed in partnership and collaboration with the sector/services and key peak bodies if they are to be truly sustainable. Whilst it is important to partner with individual services, driving sectoral systemic change needs to be championed and driven by those bodies that have the most trust and reach into the sectors they represent.
- DV Vic has found that the development and coordination of a state-wide sector led Community of Practice for Rainbow Tick and LGBTIQ inclusion have been a particularly successful in terms of engaging the SFVS sector in inclusion initiatives. DV Vic currently coordinates 9 different Communities of Practice across the SFVS sector and recognises that ongoing expertise and resourcing is key to their success.
- Planning and sequencing of inclusion initiatives needs to be collaborative and not a top-down process. LGBTIQ inclusion initiatives in the SFVS sector were rolled out by government at the same time as many other major family violence reforms which in turn had a direct impact on the capacity of many SFVS to be able to engage substantially due to the considerable pressure of competing priorities.
- Rainbow Tick Accreditation is important for those organisations that can afford it, however DV Vic believes it is not sustainable as an inclusion strategy across whole sectors due to the often prohibitive resource costs involved in already very stretched services that are under enormous pressure. This was the case in the rollout of Rainbow Tick accreditation across the specialist family violence sector with a significant number of the 20 SFVS who were part funded, yet to achieve accreditation mainly due to lack of resources and demand on their services. Whilst the provision of Rainbow Tick How2 Training was offered to the remaining SFVS and broader family violence services, there were no resources at all to implement or embed Rainbow Tick in the organisations that attended the training.
- Inclusion tools, information and training need to be tailored for the sectors they are seeking to inform and train. Whilst there are generalist LGBTIQ inclusion tools/ information, DV Vic has found that the development of sector-specific tools and frameworks is critical to ensure currency and uptake.
- Whilst LGBTIQ inclusion training for staff and individual organisations is important, it does not achieve systemic change. That change needs to be led, driven, and resourced at all levels of a sector at both policy and practice levels.
- Inclusive data collection remains a concern for diverse communities including LGBTIQ communities. Lack of standardised inclusive data collection policy and databases for intake and reporting family violence further compounds the invisibility of LGBTIQ people in the family violence system and the lack of “linked-up” referral pathways.

- Inclusive language is important but also needs to be contextualised. Due to much of the previous language around family violence being binary-gendered, DV Vic developed a paper titled *Operationalising Intersectional Feminism: A discussion paper about language and family violence* to contextualise the use of gender-inclusive language and family violence. The importance of expanding the gendered lens, whilst ensuring the recognition that most family violence victim/survivors are women and children was important.
- Whilst DV Vic has been proud to be leading inclusion in the SFVS sector, there has been some surprising outcomes. The impact of inclusion initiatives on some LGBTIQ people working in services has not always been positive due to several factors, including but not limited to, having their lives/experiences/communities suddenly placed in the spotlight. Strategies need to be developed that address these kinds of challenges and support LGBTIQ people within services that may be undertaking inclusion initiatives.
- Many LGBTIQ inclusion strategies promote partnering with LGBTIQ organisations however it is important to recognise the limitations of the much smaller LGBTIQ-specific sector to do this without adequate resourcing. Within the family violence context, there is a need to ensure parity of funding to SFVS and a diverse range of LGBTIQ organisations to be able to support the work of inclusion and engagement. There is considerably less funding available for some smaller LGBTIQ organisations, and these organisations are often not adequately compensated for the enormous amount of time they may spend supporting services and government with expert advice, engagement, representation at meetings /committees and provision of information/resources etc.
- DV Vic believes that sector-led development and implementation of inclusive Codes of Practice across service delivery sectors is an important strategy to create systemic change. DV Vic has developed the new inclusive SFVS *Code of Practice: Principles and Standards for Specialist Family Violence Services for Victim-Survivors* (the Code) over the past year and is hoping to have this attached as part of all future funding agreements with SFVS. The Code can be found here: <http://dvvic.org.au/members/practice-development/>

### Recommendations:

- There needs to be a common conceptualisation of family violence as experienced in the LGBTIQ community that reflects the dynamics of power and control, reflected in policy and practice.
- To address systemic change most effectively and increase ownership across service sectors, ensure collaboration on planning, development, and implementation of inclusion initiatives with peak bodies and key services.
- Rather than a top-down, resource intensive accreditation approach, explore the development and implementation of a capacity-building framework for LGBTIQ inclusion that is adequately resourced over longer time frames.
- Explore the development and resourcing of sector wide LGBTIQ Inclusion Communities of Practice.

- Ensure that adequate resources and funding be provided to a diverse range of LGBTIQ organisations to build capacity to support inclusion across sectors.
- Consider the development of an all of government “Inclusive Data Collection” policy framework as well as ensure that all government reporting databases such as SHIP have inclusive fields.
- Ensure that intersectionality is defined and applied correctly across government and is not conflated with “diversity and inclusion” or individual identities.
- Develop LGBTIQ Inclusive service directory for specific sectors and warm referrals.
- In collaboration with service sectors, explore the development of inclusive Codes of Practice and how they may be applied to funding agreements.