

# Rainbow Action Plan

July 2024



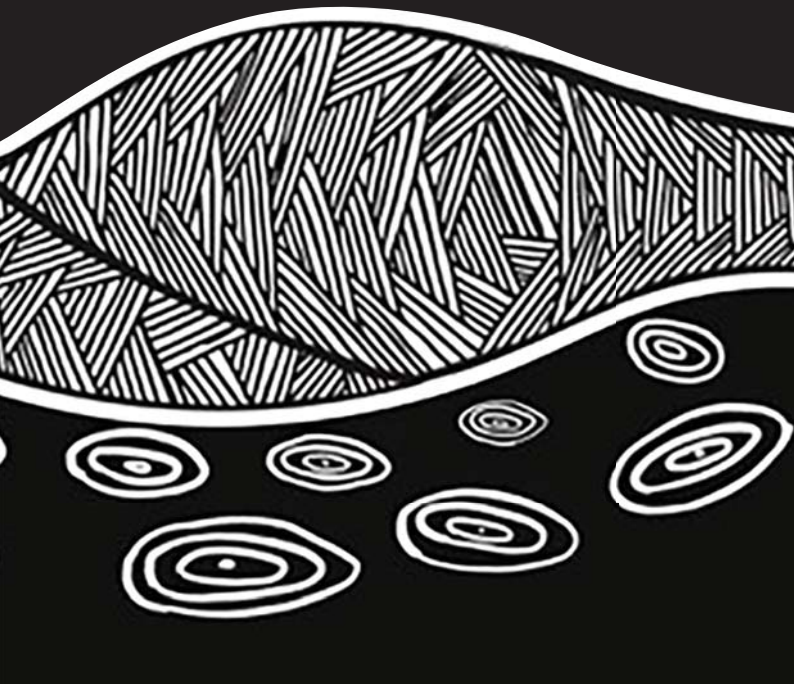
for LGBTIQ+ Inclusion

2024 - 2026

# Acknowledgement of Country

Hepburn Shire Council acknowledges the Dja Dja Wurrung as the Traditional Owners of the lands and waters on which we live and work. On these lands, Djaara have performed age-old ceremonies of celebration, initiation and renewal. We recognise their resilience through dispossession and it is a testament to their continuing culture and tradition, which is strong and thriving.

We also acknowledge the neighbouring Traditional Owners, the Wurundjeri to our south east and the Wadawurrung to our south west and pay our respect to all Aboriginal peoples, their culture and lore. We acknowledge their living culture and the unique role they play in the life of this region.



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# Mayor's message

Hepburn Shire Council is proud to present its first Rainbow Action Plan. It commits to a clear and achievable set of actions to guide our work to create a safe and welcoming community for all LGBTIQ+ people.

This plan will help to ensure that all LGBTIQ+ people feel supported, connected, visible and safe in our community. It will also guide us in providing an inclusive workplace for LGBTIQ+ staff and volunteers.

Hepburn Shire Council recognises and celebrates the important contributions that LGBTIQ+ people, businesses and visitors bring to the life of our Shire. Together we share an inclusive, resilient, vibrant, sustainable, innovative and diverse community.

We will treat all people fairly, equitably and with respect. We will not tolerate discrimination or violence in any form, against any part of our community. The plan builds on Council's initiative in 2021 to create an LGBTIQ+ Advisory Committee. I would like to thank the committee members and many in the Hepburn community for their advice and input into this Plan.



Cr Brian Hood  
Mayor









# A note on language

A variety of abbreviations are used to describe the LGBTIQ+ community and to celebrate people's different and diverse experiences. Each abbreviation has limitations.

Hepburn Shire Council has chosen the abbreviation 'LGBTIQ+' to describe people, families, communities and organisations that are Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and gender-diverse, Intersex, Queer and Asexual. The plus symbol (+) indicates that these initials cannot cover everyone's experiences of sexuality, gender identity and sex characteristics.

We acknowledge that some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities use the terms 'sistergirls' and 'brotherboys'. Their preferred abbreviation can be written as 'LGBTIQ+SB'.

Council will sometimes choose to respectfully use 'Rainbow' as an inclusive umbrella term for all who are represented by the letters in LGBTIQ+. For example, this is the 'Rainbow Action Plan'.

We recognise that each person reflected in these letters has a different lived experience and we do consider the impact of intersectionality.

Finally, we must contend with the history of these words which were (and are) used to abuse and denigrate people. Some words, like gay, have been reclaimed and are now used with pride. The word 'queer' has become inclusive and uniting for some, but other people may still find it offensive and disrespectful.







# Community vision

Hepburn Shire – An inclusive rural community in Dja Dja Wurrung Country, where all people are valued, partnerships are fostered, environments protected, diversity supported and innovation embraced.





Photo: Sandy Scheltema

## Diversity, inclusion and equality

We are proud of our Shire's diversity. We are enriched when all people, regardless of cultural background, ability, gender, sexuality or identity, are embraced and supported to participate and contribute to the life of our community.

Council has developed plans that focus on key populations in our Shire. This Rainbow Action Plan demonstrates Council's focus on inclusion for lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and gender diverse, intersex, queer and asexual (LGBTIQA+) people.

Council is committed to achieving equality for LGBTIQA+ people. We will work to end LGBTIQA+ discrimination and affirm and defend the fundamental human rights of LGBTIQA+ people.





Photo: Michelle Donnelly Photography

# LGBTIQA+ people in Hepburn Shire

The Victorian Population Health Survey (2017) shows that 7.5% of Hepburn Shire's population identify as LGBTIQA+, which is higher than the 5.7% average for rural and regional local government areas in Victoria.

It is possible that surveys under-report our LGBTIQA+ population because, anecdotally, many 'local' LGBTIQA+ people have their primary residence in Melbourne.

Interpretation of household population data from the 2021 Census shows that localities within Hepburn Shire have some of the highest rates of same-sex-couple households (per 1000 people living as couples) in Victoria.

Four of the 'top 10' localities for Victorian same-sex households are in our Shire. They are Hepburn Springs (16.3%), Daylesford (13.2%), Hepburn (11.2%) and Glenlyon (8.5%). For comparison, the highest figure in metropolitan Melbourne was 11.2% in Collingwood.

The average rate of same-sex-couple households across Hepburn Shire was 6.8%, just behind top-placed City of Yarra (6.9%). The average across all Victorian councils was 1.5%.





# Why is this plan important?

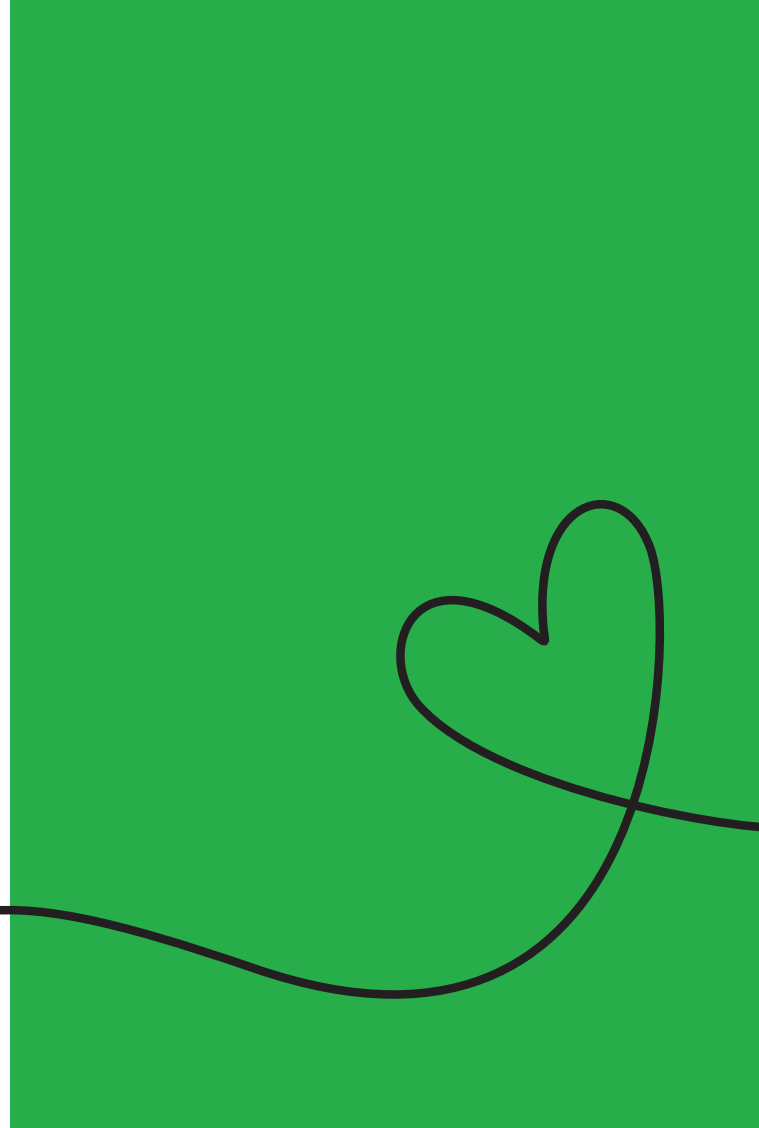
Everyone should have the opportunity to live their lives in a safe and welcoming environment, free from discrimination and abuse.

Many LGBTIQ+ people live happy, connected, positive and healthy lives. Yet research shows that LGBTIQ+ Victorians face higher levels of unfair treatment, discrimination, social exclusion, harassment and violence. The figures are higher in regional and rural areas and for LGBTIQ+ people from multicultural backgrounds. \*

The single strongest and most consistent predictor of poor mental health and wellbeing among LGBTIQ+ communities is experiences of abuse, harassment or assault. \*

This Rainbow Action Plan will help to deliver safe and inclusive services, facilities, programs and events for our LGBTIQ+ communities. The Plan aims to reduce the likelihood of direct or indirect discrimination related to sexual orientation, gender identity or intersex status.

\* Pride in our future: Victoria's LGBTIQ+ strategy 2022-32





# Rainbow ready roadmap

This Action Plan was developed using the Victorian Government's Rainbow Ready Roadmap methodology. The roadmap was co-developed with LGBTIQ+ communities, so that regional and rural communities can work together to address inequalities experienced by LGBTIQ+ people.

## Our rainbow goal

Hepburn Shire Council will be acknowledged as a leader in LGBTIQ+ inclusion, because of the way we understand and address the needs of our LGBTIQ+ constituents and work with them to build a safe and welcoming culture of LGBTIQ+ inclusivity in the Shire.

For matters beyond Council's direct control, we will demonstrate leadership through effective advocacy, thereby helping to achieve change.

The roadmap identifies four Core Principles of LGBTIQ+ inclusion which are; Understanding, Inclusion, Visibility and Safety. It also suggests 15 Indicators, which are measures used to understand the ways in which Hepburn Shire Council already practices LGBTIQ+ inclusion, and where there is room for improvement.

Guided by these core principles and indicators, Council has identified more than 40 achievable actions that will help us make progress towards an even safer and more welcoming Shire where LGBTIQ+ people will want to live, work and visit.





# Actions

Principles	Indicators of inclusion	Council's planned actions
<b>Understanding</b>		
1	Council educates its staff and volunteers on LGBTIQ+ inclusion.	<p>1.1 Continue to offer LGBTIQ+ inclusion as part of mandatory induction training for new staff. Expand this induction training to include new volunteers and new Councillors.</p> <p>1.2 Develop and deliver a more comprehensive inclusion training program for existing staff and volunteers, with annual refresher training.</p> <p>1.3 Continue awareness-raising activities for staff and volunteers, including Council's celebration of LGBTIQ+ days of significance, eg, IDAHOBIT, Wear It Purple Day, Trans Awareness Week, World AIDS Day.</p>
<b>Inclusion</b>		
2	LGBTIQ+ residents take part in Council committees and in Council planning.	<p>2.1 Provide an annual report to the community about progress made against this plan and celebrate the achievements.</p> <p>2.2 Continue to support and engage with our LGBTIQ+ community members and consider their advice on Council's proposed policies, plans and strategies.</p>
3	Council grants are provided to support local LGBTIQ+ initiatives.	<p>3.1 Promote Council grant opportunities to local LGBTIQ+ groups and organisations, so that they can develop and deliver community-led programs and events.</p> <p>3.2 Strengthen grant-seeking capability within LGBTIQ+ community groups, eg, by holding an information session covering eligibility rules and application processes.</p>
4	Council supports local LGBTIQ+ events.	<p>4.1 Continue to provide support for ChillOut Festival – regional Victoria's largest and longest running LGBTIQ+ festival.</p> <p>4.2 Continue the tradition of Councillors, staff and volunteers proudly marching in the annual ChillOut Parade.</p> <p>4.3 Council holds public activities and initiatives to improve inclusion of, and understanding about, LGBTIQ+ people.</p>
5	Council provides an inclusive workplace for LGBTIQ+ employees and volunteers.	<p>5.1 Incorporate gender inclusive language into all standards and protocols, forms, surveys and induction processes. [Refer to Gender Equity Action Plan 1.3]</p> <p>5.2 Examine our recruitment process with a gender and diversity lens. [Refer to Gender Equity Action Plan 2.1].</p> <p>5.3 Strengthen data collection systems and processes to fill employment data gaps. [Refer to Gender Equity Action Plan 3.1]</p> <p>5.4 Analyse staff surveys and feedback opportunities to better understand people's perceptions of safety in the workplace and how these may be different for LGBTIQ+ staff.</p> <p>5.5 Apply LGBTIQ+ inclusion principles when developing policies about volunteers.</p>

Principles	Indicators of inclusion	Council's planned actions
<b>Visibility</b>		
6	Council has a strategy or plan for LGBTIQ+ inclusion.	6.1 Pursue the idea of incorporating 'LGBTIQ+ inclusion' in the 2025-2028 Council Plan as part of a holistic 'inclusion' framework.
7	Council has a statement of LGBTIQ+ inclusion that is publicly visible.	7.1 Council's statement of commitment to LGBTIQ+ inclusion will be featured on our website, in relevant publications and promoted to staff and volunteers. 7.2 Promote the statement of commitment to LGBTIQ+ inclusion at Council-run LGBTIQ+ activities and initiatives.
8	Council information incorporates LGBTIQ+ inclusive language and images.	8.1 Update and expand our current inclusive language guidelines (in Brand Guidelines) to reflect best practice. 8.2 Expand our inclusive image library by sourcing new images and conducting photoshoots to obtain images representing the diversity of Hepburn's LGBTIQ+ community. 8.3 Develop and expand the capacity of staff to use LGBTIQ+ inclusive language and images.
9	Council takes opportunities to fly Pride flags and display other symbols of Pride.	9.1 Fly Pride flags on the Daylesford community flagpole on LGBTIQ+ days of significance, such as IDAHOBIT, Wear It Purple, Trans Awareness Week, World AIDS Day. 9.2 Investigate community flagpoles to be installed at a prominent location in Trentham, Creswick and Clunes so that Pride flags can be flown Shire-wide. 9.3 Investigate relocation of the Daylesford community flagpole to a prominent place where larger groups can safely gather for flag-raising ceremonies. 9.4 Maintain current symbols of Pride and identify opportunities for new symbols of Pride throughout the Shire.
10	Council's website and social media accounts profile LGBTIQ+ initiatives, events, people and resources.	10.1 Continue to profile LGBTIQ+ content on social media, eg, sharing content related to LGBTIQ+ days of significance and community events. 10.2 Review Council's website content annually so that content relevant to our LGBTIQ+ community remains up-to-date, comprehensive and easy to find. 10.3 Encourage local community support and services organisations to promote their LGBTIQ+ services and events on platforms that link to Council's website.





Principles	Indicators of inclusion	Council's planned actions
<b>Safety</b>		
11	Bookings and assessment processes are LGBTIQ+ inclusive.	11.1 Develop staff capacity to audit and improve booking, assessment and intake forms to ensure they are LGBTIQ+ inclusive across all Council services.
12	LGBTIQ+ groups and services are supported to access Council spaces.	12.1 Invite LGBTIQ+ groups and services to consider using Council spaces. 12.2 Develop the capacity of LGBTIQ+ groups and services to access Council spaces, eg, by holding an information session covering bookings, fee discounts, permits, risk plans and public liability insurance. 12.3 Review current Council operational spaces to ensure they are welcoming and inclusive for all genders and intersectionalities. [Refer to Gender Equity Action Plan 1.5]
13	Council provides all-gender bathroom and change room options.	13.1 Include all-gender toilet facilities and change room options in all new Council-controlled building and redevelopment projects. 13.2 Implement operational changes to provide an all-gender toilet option at existing Council facilities. 13.3 Work with the owners/operators of non-Council public facilities (eg, sporting clubs, community halls) encouraging them to provide all-gender options for toilets and change rooms.
14	Potential risks to the safety of LGBTIQ+ group members are identified and minimised.	14.1 Consult LGBTIQ+ groups to understand current concerns about community safety. 14.2 Identify emerging risks to LGBTIQ+ people in the Shire and work with local police and other services to mitigate those risks. 14.3 Develop risk management plans for Council's LGBTIQ+ public programs and activities to address the safety of all participants, staff and volunteers.
15	Council responds to LGBTIQ+ phobic incidents by advocating for the rights of LGBTIQ+ members and taking steps to prevent future incidents.	15.1 Council makes public statements of support for LGBTIQ+ people and in opposition to discrimination and violence in all forms. 15.2 Work with local police to create community guidelines for responding to any LGBTIQ+ phobic incidents and share these guidelines with the community. 15.3 Continue to monitor Council's social media accounts to detect and (when appropriate) remove or respond to LGBTIQ+ phobic social media postings. 15.4 Council will internally review LGBTIQ+ phobic incidents brought to our attention, assessing the effectiveness of our responses and follow-up actions. 15.5 Promote the Community Reporting Tool (Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission) for reporting discrimination and breaches of human rights, and make the link visible on Council's website. 15.6 Enforce the Local Laws on Community Amenity and Municipal Places to protect LGBTIQ+ people from exposure to threatening, abusive or insulting behaviour which interferes with their use or enjoyment of a public place.

# Evaluation

Council will monitor and report on the success and progress of this plan. An annual evaluation will be conducted by an internal working party. The outcomes will be discussed with the LGBTIQ+ Advisory Committee and their advice will be sought on ways to improve future plans.



Photo: Sandy Scheltema

# Glossary

For further information, please refer to the 2023 Victorian Government LGBTIQ+ Inclusive Language Guide.

**Asexual** ~ refers to a person who does not experience sexual attraction but may or may not experience romantic attraction towards others. Asexual people can be any gender or sexual orientation.

**Bisexual** ~ a person romantically and/or sexually attracted to people of their own gender and other genders.

**Cis or cisgender (pronounced 'sis')** ~ refers to a person whose gender is the same as their sex recorded at birth.

**Endosex** ~ refers to people whose sex characteristics meet medical and social norms for typically 'male' or 'female' bodies. (Sometimes used in contrast to 'Intersex'.)

**Gay** ~ a person romantically and/or sexually attracted to people of the same sex and/or gender as themselves. Often used to describe men who are attracted to other men, but some women and gender diverse people may describe themselves as gay.

**Gender** ~ is part of a person's personal and social identity. It can be about one's experience as a woman, man or gender diverse person.

**Gender diverse** ~ is an umbrella term for a range of different genders. Language in this area is dynamic and always changing. Some examples include genderfluid, genderqueer, gender non-conforming, agender, bi-gender and non-binary.

**Heterosexual** ~ is another word for 'straight'. It generally refers to men who are attracted to women, or women who are attracted to men.

**Intersectionality** ~ describes how different parts of a person's identity or circumstances



(such as age, race, culture, disability, gender, location or religion) intersect and combine to shape people's life experiences, including of discrimination. Being LGBTIQ+ is only one part of any person or community. Intersectionality recognises that the different parts of someone's identity and circumstances cannot be disentangled or considered in isolation.

**Intersex** ~ some people are born with a variation to physical or biological sex characteristics (including chromosomes, hormones or anatomy) called intersex variations. Some people use the term 'intersex', while others do not connect to the term nor with 'LGBTIQ+'. Intersex people can have any gender identity or sexuality.

**Lesbian** ~ refers to a woman (cis or trans) or gender diverse person who is romantically and/or sexually attracted to women.

**LGBTIQ+ phobia** ~ is a wide range of negative emotions, attitudes and behaviours toward LGBTIQ+ people, or those perceived as LGBTIQ+ people. It has been defined as contempt, prejudice, aversion, hatred or antipathy. LGBTIQ+ phobia may be experienced as stigma, bullying, abuse or discrimination.

**Non-binary** ~ is a term for people whose gender sits outside of the spectrum of man or woman or male and female. A person who is non-binary might feel like they have a mix of genders, or like they have no gender at all.

**Pansexual** ~ a person romantically and/or sexually attracted to people of all genders and regardless of gender.

**Queer** ~ is often used as an umbrella term for diverse genders or sexualities. Some people use queer to describe their own gender or sexuality, as an identity that does not correspond to heterosexual norms.

**Questioning** ~ refers to people who are exploring or questioning their gender or sexual orientation.

People may not wish to have one of the other labels applied to them yet, for a variety of reasons.

**Rainbow families** ~ are families where LGBTIQ+ people are parents, co-parents and carers. This includes soon-to-be parents, donors and surrogates. Rainbow families come in all different shapes and sizes. They can be sole parents or carers and can live across one or many homes.

**Sex** ~ refers to a person's biological sex characteristics. This includes their sex chromosomes, hormones and reproductive organs.

**Sex recorded at birth** ~ is a medical data collection term, based upon a person's sex characteristics and reproductive organs observed at, or soon after, birth.

**Sexuality (or sexual orientation)** ~ refers to a person's intimate, romantic and/or sexual attractions to others. It can include sexual identity (how a person thinks of their sexuality), attraction (romantic or sexual interest in another person) and behaviour. Sexuality may be fluid for some people and change over time. For others it can be the same throughout their life.

**Sistergirl and Brotherboy** ~ are general terms used in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to describe transgender people and their relationships, and non-trans but non-conforming Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. For example, both lesbian and heterosexual Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women may refer to themselves as 'sistergirls', 'sisters' or 'tiddas'. Gay Aboriginal men may also refer to themselves as 'sisters'.

**Trans or Transgender** ~ refers to someone whose gender does not exclusively align with their sex recorded at birth. Not all trans people will use this term to describe themselves.



## Acknowledgements

Members of Hepburn Shire Council's LGBTIQ+ and Gender Equity Advisory Committees

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